

SERMONS

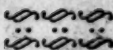
BY THE LATE

REV. MR. WILLIAM BEAT,

MINISTER OF KILRENNY, FIFE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

An Extract from a Sermon preached at Kilrenny on the first Sunday
after the interment of the Author, by DA HILL, Principal of
St Mary's College.



EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY ALEXANDER SMELLIE.

1799.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Reverend Mr WILLIAM BEAT died at the Manse of Kilrenny on the 21st of December 1797, in the 87th year of his age, and the 52d year of his ministry.

HIS Widow thinks that she pays the most respectful tribute to his memory by publishing a few of his Sermons; and through the favour of his most attached Friend, Principal HILL, she presents, to those who are not acquainted with his character, the following extract from the conclusion of a Sermon preached at Kilrenny upon the 31st of December 1797.

“THE soothing views which I have been endeavouring this day to illustrate (from 1 Thess. iv. 18, 19.) were presented by

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by the Apostles to the Theſſalonians, where they were mourning the loſs of ſome departed friends ; and the circumſtances in which I now addreſs you, have naturally ſuggeſted them to my thoughts. A few days ago, you attended to the houſe appointed for all living the remains of a man whom you long honoured with your eſteem : And I, who in the beginning of my Miniſtry was ſupported by the countenance and aſſiſtance of my Father's friend, and have received, during the whole courſe of my life, continued expreſſions of his kindneſs, am now ſpeaking from that place which his removal has made vacant.

THOSE who enjoyed the ſame habits of intimacy with him, to which I was admitted, will agree with me in bearing teſtimony to his probity and his talents: And even thoſe who ſaw him only at a diſtance, regarded him with reverence. His opinions
upon

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upon every subject were heard with attention, because they were the result of a sound understanding, well exercised by reading and meditation. His manners commanded universal respect, because they were uniformly decent and exemplary, such as might be expected from a man who never forgot his station, but in all things approved himself a minister of God. His mind was firm, manly, and independent. In all matters of public concern, when his conscience told him he was doing his duty, opposition never checked his exertions; and in questions which affected his brethren and his successors as much as himself, he defended the rights of his order with a spirit which feared not the face of man. But about private emolument he discovered very little solicitude. No man ever possessed a mind more truly superior to every thing sordid, more completely disengaged from the love of filthy lucre. He spent what
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he had freely, hospitably, generously ; and, in his house, the scene of all his expences, there was a chearfulness, a gaiety, a kindliness, which might teach any man how to use this world as not abusing it. To those who lived with him, he was uniformly courteous, gentle, and affectionate. Amidst the veneration with which his friends looked up to his character, they found him to them always pliant and accommodating, ready to sacrifice his wishes to theirs, willing to undertake any trouble for their sake, and disposed to enliven their society by good humour and mirth. His house was a Bethel, in which the exercises of family worship were statedly performed ; but his piety was without gloom. He was a pattern of the gladness put into the heart of those upon whom the Lord lifts the light of his countenance. He rose from conversing with his Maker to enjoy with a light heart the society of his family. The
voice

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voice of rejoicing and salvation, was in his tabernacle.—The firmness of his mind was not shaken by the acute unremitting pain with which for several years he was tried. His patience and fortitude were admired by those around him; through the blessing of heaven they contributed to his cure; and his conversation, in the latter years of his life, was filled with expressions of gratitude to the Almighty for the ease and comfort which he enjoyed.

HIS private life was interesting, delightful, and instructive to his friends: His public life was most edifying and salutary to you. As long as he had strength, he continued to do his duty in this place, and he laboured diligently from house to house, exhorting, and comforting, and charging every one of you, as a father doth his children. For a long course of years, you enjoyed the full vigour of his mind; and
few

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few congregations in the Christian church have been blessed with so high a privilege. He did not serve his Master with that which cost him nothing: He laboured hard in composing his sermons; and he laboured to good purpose. The excellence of his matter, the strength of his nervous pointed expression, the bold painting of character in which he abounded, the richness and variety of his fancy, chastised by a thorough acquaintance with Theology, and by a deep sense of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, rendered him an original, impressive preacher. He arrested the attention of the careless, compelling them to listen; for, if we may be allowed to apply to him the character which an Evangelist gives of his Master, he taught as one having authority. The ear which heard him blessed him; not because he was a flattering, but because he was a faithful preacher, who told men
their

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their faults, who warned them of their danger, and carried home the truth with power and demonstration to their consciences and their bosoms.

OUR late Pastor is the last of a race of venerable men in this neighbourhood, whom many of you often heard. They have been called to give an account of their stewardship: We are left behind, a younger race, born in other days, bred with different manners. We live in evil times, when iniquity abounds, when the fundamental truths of religion are openly denied, when the love of many hath waxen cold, and men heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears, because they will not endure sound doctrine. Brethren, pray for us: Pray that we may be enabled to walk in the steps of those who have gone before us, to fulfil the ministry which we have received, to hold fast the truth, and by

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found speech both to convince the gain-sayers, and to edify the Church of Christ.— Brethren, assist us in our endeavours to defend the city of our God. When the enemies of the cross of Christ openly avow their hostility, be ye as open and firm in the profession of your faith. Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord; but, by purity, truth, justice, and charity, make your light so to shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may honour that blessed name by which you are called. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: Avoid those who cause divisions and offences; and, forgetting all differences upon lesser matters, unite with cordiality and zeal in the maintenance of our common faith.

THIS is the counsel which your late Pastor, had he now been speaking to you, would have given: This is the conduct
which

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which will shew that you have profited by his instructions. While you pay this tribute of affectionate respect to his memory, look forward to the time when he shall receive from the Chief Shepherd a crown of glory that fadeth not away, and when his joy, I trust, will be increased by discerning in the multitude that stands around the throne many whom he had loved, and warned, and counselled upon earth. Amen.'

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S E R M O N I.

THE WISDOM OF GOD AS PREACHED
BY THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST.

Preached before the Provincial Synod of
Fife, October 1765.

I. CORINTH. ii. 6.

*Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that
are perfect.*

WISDOM! a venerable name; but
wide is the difference between the
name and the thing. There is what is cal-
led wisdom among men, which can claim
no higher beginning than human inven-
tion, and serves no nobler end than the
things of this world. Of this kind, there

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is

2 *The Wisdom of God as Preached*

is a wisdom in deeds, that is, a faculty in men of chusing, fitting, and applying means dexterously to their purposes, and of prosecuting them with vigilance and vigour. In this the mouth of wisdom has declared, that 'the children of this word are wiser 'in their generation than the children of 'light;' Luke, xvi. 8. This is not the wisdom which Christ and his Apostles taught. There is a wisdom of words, as the Apostle speaks; that is, an art of colouring error up to a strong appearance of truth, a knack of inventing topics, of ranging them in order, of uttering them with address, and illustrating them with all the light and force of language, to persuade men to receive and adopt wrong principles and measures of action. This kind of wisdom plans all its schemes, works all its effects, reaps all its advantages from the weakness and imperfection of human powers; and the more simple and silly men are, the more easily may a subtle disputant, or an artful speaker, wind and worm them out or in to his purposes. By such means cunning men have acquired dominion with far
greater

greater ease over the minds of their fellow-creatures, than the most mighty conquerors over their bodies and estates; and thousands have been soothed, and softened, and subdued by the wisdom of words, who never could be conquered by the force of arms. Besides, that dominion obtained by violence must ever be galling to nature, while that wrought out by persuasion is received and entertained with pleasure and admiration so long as the fallacy is not discerned. This false eloquence, this art of deceiving the simple by excellency of speech, this trick of popularity, has ever been held in high repute in all nations and ages, particularly in Greece in the Apostle's days, and had perverted the minds of many who had been converted to the Christian faith by his labours, especially at Corinth, where they began to despise the simplicity of his style and the plainness of his address, accounting his speech rude, and his bodily presence contemptible. But whatever the world might think or say, he would not give up his claim to the teaching of wisdom, but expressly asserts it, and illustrates his assertion both by negative and positive

4 *The Wisdom of God as Preached*

positive terms. 'Howbeit we speak wisdom; not the wisdom of this world, nor of the Princes of this world, but the wisdom of God,' of which the world knew nothing, nor could know, unless it had pleased him to reveal it; which he therefore calls *wisdom in a mystery*, or *bidden wisdom*. This is true wisdom, and we speak it. *Wisdom* is here put, by a common figure of speech, to signify the effects of wisdom. When the Apostle saith he spoke wisdom, he does not mean that he uttered abstract speculations concerning the wisdom of God, but the marvellous effects of that wisdom manifested in the redemption of man by Christ Jesus; and he adds, *among them that are perfect*, as a gentle rebuke to those at Corinth who did not yet perceive the wisdom of the doctrines he had taught them; hereby insinuating the weakness and imperfection of their minds, in order to fire their emulation to learn true wisdom: for to minds that are ill-disposed, wisdom cannot appear wisdom; but to such as are duly qualified, it will appear amiable as it is. Though wisdom be spoken to fools they

they will not understand it, but such as are perfect will see the glory and beauty of it.

What I further propose, through grace, and with submission to the judgment of my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, is,

I. To explain the character here mentioned, as necessary to discern true wisdom.

II. To show the wisdom of God as it was preached by the Apostles of Christ.

III. Conclude with an inference or two.

I. To explain the character here mentioned, as necessary to discern true wisdom.

1. The phrase used in the text, 'perfect men,' denotes men endowed with a competent measure of understanding. For it is evident, that he opposes them that are perfect, to such as he calls babes in Christ, ch. iii. 1.; in whom the faculty of understanding is so weak, that they are not capable to discern the truth and beauty of the very first and plainest principles of religion instilled into them, much less the consummate wisdom of the whole plan of mercy. Such weak minds require a particular management,

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nagement, and must be led up step by step from the most simple truths, to the knowledge of such as are more sublime and complicated, till they arrive at a firmness of mind sufficient to bear a full discovery without danger. Thus this Apostle tutored the Corinthians, ch. iii. 2. ' I have fed you
' with milk and not with meat ; for hither-
' to ye were not able to bear it.' And repeats the reproof to them for not improving under his instructions as they ought, by adding, ' Neither yet are ye able.' In like manner did he manage the Hebrews, ch. v. 12, 13, 14. ' When for the time ye ought
' to be teachers, ye have need that one
' teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not
' of strong meat : for every one that useth
' milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness ; for he is a babe. But strong
' meat belongeth to them that are of full
' age, even those who by reason of use
' have their senses exercised to discern both
' good and evil.' ' And therefore,' says he, ch. vi. 1. ' leaving the principles of the
' doctrine

‘ doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection.’ Not absolute, but relative perfection; for no man in this state can reach absolute perfection either of knowledge or holiness. The most perfect here has still room, and therefore receives a commandment, to ‘ grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus.’ The Apostle then means, by ‘ them that are perfect,’ such as have attained that measure of understanding which is necessary to comprehend the wise design of the whole, and perfect consistency of the several doctrines of Christianity. When they are grown up to such a maturity of judgment, then they are capable to discern the wisdom of God in the Gospel dispensation, as full grown men are capable to see the reason of things, which mere children cannot comprehend.

2. ‘ Perfect men’ conveys the idea of minds unprejudiced, and free from the bias of irregular passions and affections; and this is indeed necessary to a just understanding of things: for truth can never appear as it is through a gross and fallacious medium. The greatest beauty must look distorted

8 *The Wisdom of God as Preached*

torted and deformed to the eye, when it is viewed in an unequal glass: so truth and wisdom must take the form of error and folly in a mind under the power of prejudice, violent passions, and vitious affections. These are enemies to truth, antagonists of wisdom, and the great sources of disorder in the human soul. Error in the understanding is owing to prejudice, and error in the heart to misplaced affections. These are capable of working such strong delusions in the soul, that it can believe a lie to be truth, or truth to be a lie. This made the Gospel of Christ a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks. This made the Christians at Corinth so blunt and blind in the knowledge of Christ. They were yet carnal, and so not disposed to learn the truth and wisdom of things spiritual. There was envying, and strife, and divisions among them, each blindly following the spirit of his party; and to such dispositions true wisdom can never appear. Though Wisdom lift up her voice in the streets, such have no ears to hear, no heart to receive it. Simple ones
love

love simplicity, scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Though the price be put in their hands, they have no heart to get wisdom. It is only such as study to free their minds from the power of prejudice, are willing to hear and receive the truth, though it should condemn themselves, and resolved to correct the irregular inclinations of their own hearts, that can have so much as a venture to learn wisdom. And the more active and zealous they are in this work, the more speedy their progress in the way of wisdom, the quicker advances they make toward perfection. Wisdom may be spoken to such with advantage, because such are disposed and prepared to learn it.

3. A sincere and upright heart is another character essential to the perfect man. Wisdom flies the grasp of a double and dishonest mind ; and, though it were possible he could find it, he would soon let it go ; for the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. The eye must be single, as our Lord speaks, the heart honest and good, before wisdom can enter the soul : But Wisdom offers herself to a candid and impartial

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inquirer,

inquirer, and uprightness of heart opens the soul to receive her. This is what the Scripture currently styles a *perfect heart*. For an unfeigned love of the truth, a sincere desire to find it, and a fixed resolution to be guided by it, is the direct road to perfection. Integrity makes all the powers of the soul one, centers all their force in one single point, to serve one single purpose, that is, to know truth in order to practise it; and, where there is a perfect concord and harmony of powers, it cannot fail to give both vigour and dispatch toward the point in view; and integrity will be found both the surest and the shortest way to wisdom; whereas the way of dishonesty is folly. It is various and multiform in its views and operations, scatters and divides the powers of action, so that it leaves neither strength nor counsel in the soul to seek or find wisdom. But the upright, the sincere heart, the honest, the ingenuous soul, who faithfully improves the advantages that God hath given him, takes the sure way to find more and more, till he come to the measure of the stature of the perfect man, who understands

derstands true wisdom, and learns her doctrine to perfection. Job, 7. 17. 'He that doth the will of God, shall know of the doctrine of Christ, whether it be of God.'

Enough is said, I think, to satisfy us, that knowledge, purity, and integrity of heart, are characters essential to them that are perfect, or duly qualified to discern true wisdom; and particularly the wisdom of God manifested in the redemption of man by Jesus Christ, according to the doctrine of his Apostles.—Which is the

II. Point I proposed to illustrate.—Here all the difficulty is to be short and distinct, as it neither suits the time nor the respect I owe to my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, to exhibit such a full and extensive view of such an important subject as it requires. Let us only indulge our thoughts a little, then, upon the following particulars.

1. We read clear characters of divine wisdom in the discovery that the gospel has given man of his true state. This shews that we are creatures made for eternity, formed for the enjoyment of God,
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the chief good ; but fallen from our integrity into a state of vice and misery, from which no created power could deliver us : A state which renders the most glorious privilege of our nature the greatest curse, and converts immortality to a pledge of eternal woe. A sad reverse indeed, but true ! Of this, the Apostles of Christ have given us a most affecting discovery by the gospel. This is the root of bitterness from which all the miseries spring that man can either feel in this world, or fear in the next. Never did time present such a doleful scene to view. Experience could never furnish, nor fancy figure such a tragedy as this. Not one family, one nation, one generation, but the whole race of men, from the first made, to the last born, involved in one common ruin, while no one was able to save himself, or help another. Here is work for the wisdom of God, to find help and hope for perishing millions of immortal souls ! Accordingly, to manifest his wisdom, he hath discovered our misery, not to heighten it by despair, but with the kind, the gracious, intention to draw

draw our attention to the marvellous device of his infinite wisdom for our recovery, and to rouse up all the vigour of our active powers to improve it. If it was designed that man should return, it was fit, it was wise to let him feel the weight of his folly ; to let him know what an evil and a bitter thing it is to depart from the Lord. This, the Gospel has done to purpose ; and he is a wise man who makes advantage of such a discovery, and reads himself a creature lost to all eternity, that he may the better relish and improve the hope of mercy.

2. The wisdom of God, by the Gospel, is visible in the glorious end it purposes and publishes to the world, that is, the salvation of sinners. Wisdom is not more discernible in any thing, than in the choice of the end it intends to secure. For, if we fix upon a wrong end, we blast the benefit of the best means, and feel our folly in disappointment. Such is the wisdom of this world. Men who place their happiness in the pleasures, profits, and honours of this life, however wise they may be in the
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the choice and application of the means to secure them, yet prove fools in the end. When they have got what they sought, how can they be happy with a restless mind within, and a reeling world without them? But though they could be so in this world, they have made no provision for the next; and fools they must feel themselves in that day when God requires their souls of them. But now the Gospel of Christ reveals a happiness of another sort, the best, the greatest a reasonable nature can possibly pursue, perfect in its nature, and in its duration endless. The Gospel hath brought life and immortality to light, and manifested the wisdom of God in the salvation of men; and to speak out such a mighty design, must be speaking wisdom with a witness, such wisdom as all the labours of the learned could never unfold. Some of the best and wisest men, indeed, who never enjoyed the light of the Gospel, have reasoned much, conjectured well, and wished, and longed, and laboured for immortality, but never could form a conclusion sufficient to assure themselves, or others,

others, of the fact, much less of the way to attain it. This was a secret of wisdom in the mind of God, which he alone could reveal, as he hath actually done by the Gospel, which hath clearly unriddled the mystery, and laid a sure foundation of hope for eternal life. Were it possible that any man could discover a certain way to prolong the life of man, and secure him unchangeable happiness, free of cares, and fears, and troubles, of every kind in this world, who would not say he was wise? And who then can deny the wisdom of God in discovering the secret by which men may assure themselves of happiness to perfection, and life for evermore, when the vapour of this life is vanished away? Where can wisdom be found, if it be not in such a good, and great, and glorious design? or folly more conspicuous than in neglecting or despising it? Mark all the fools in the universe, and he is the greatest who rejects this counsel of God, and judges himself unworthy of eternal life.

3. Our thoughts might trace with pleasure a vast variety of topics to illustrate the

the wisdom of God in the means he hath chosen to accomplish the mighty design of his mercy to mankind. To reconcile sinners to himself, he hath chosen the fittest Mediator that could possibly be, his only begotten and well beloved Son: the only one who could approach God without terror, and converse with men without pollution; who alone could make up the peace, by laying his hand upon both. The infinite dignity of his person, the absolute perfection of his character, and sufficiency in every respect to accomplish the grand design, shew the wisdom of the choice in a glorious light. The manner of executing his benevolent purpose, by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, and ascending to the highest glory by the deepest humiliation, opens up a wonder of wisdom that appeared incredible to the world, and astonishing to the angels of God. He hath magnified the wisdom of God, in reconciling the salvation of sinners to the honour of the divine perfections. However inclinable goodness may be to shew mercy to the miserable, yet

yet justice is concerned to condemn the guilty, as much as to acquit the innocent. It is the nature of justice 'to render to every one according to his work.' Now, 'the wages of sin is death. And 'shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Is it not a strange paradox, which nothing but the wisdom of God himself could solve, that the just God should justify the ungodly? Yet wisdom has found out the thing, and given the interpretation thereof, in the death and resurrection of Jesus; without which, justice had been an everlasting bar to mercy. Besides, the Majesty of God was concerned to see justice executed upon the rebellious. His holiness, his veracity, must support the plea of his justice, and even wisdom itself argue it indecent that sin, which provokes the execution, should procure the abrogation of the law. But mercy appealed to the invention of wisdom at once to save the sinner, and maintain the harmony of the divine perfections; and wisdom found the way. Now, 'mercy and 'truth are met together, righteousness and 'peace have saluted each other.' Psal. lxxxv. 10. Without this, it had been faithful and

just in God to condemn the sinner ; but now, what do we hear ! ' He is faithful ' and just to forgive him, through the redemption that is in Jesus.' 1 John, i. 9. and Rom. iii. 25. 26. Such a miracle of wisdom !

But another thought strikes, which I cannot pass, to magnify the wisdom of God in the redemption of man discovered by the gospel, and that is to observe how it draws the greatest good from the greatest evil, taking occasion from sin to honour God, by raising man to a more exalted state. Sin is, strictly speaking, the only evil in the universe. It has no mixture of good, no tendency to good, no aptitude or fitness to promote the glory of God, or the happiness of man. On the contrary, it is the only thing that can dishonour the Creator, or ruin the creature, and the worst matter wisdom can work upon for good. Incomprehensible sure was the wisdom of God that could raise all things out of nothing, and dispose lifeless matter into such beautiful and various forms, and in such perfect order and harmony. But in these operations of wisdom there was no renitency
to

to the divine will. When he said, let there be light, it was light; whatever he designed, was spoken and done at once. For things not yet made could not resist his high command; and, after they were made, there was no principle of opposition in their nature to refuse the rank and order he should assign them. Therefore every creature assumed whatever form and place he pleased. When his work was done, behold all was very good. In the wide creation, there was nothing to reproach or dishonour the Maker. But sin is evil, perfectly evil, a direct contrariety to his nature and will, and therefore required a new and strange exercise of wisdom, to raise honour to God, and happiness to man, out of that which, in its nature, is destructive to both. To work light out of darkness, life from death, all things out of nothing, is wonderful wisdom, and peculiar to God only; but to bring good out of evil, and so much good, is indeed the peculiar work of wisdom. As dark and dismal colours which alone would but sully the canvas, yet when they are duly disposed by the hand of an artist, raise the light of a plain surface to a resemblance
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of life in a picture, so the evil of sin, which obscures the glory of God by the direction of his wisdom, sets off the glory of his perfections with new life and lustre. Or, as we see in the works of Creation, the wisdom of God takes advantage of the night to show all the glory and grandeur of the heavens, which the transcendent lustre of the day conceals, so, in the work of our redemption, the same wisdom took occasion, from the fall of man, to show the hidden glory of his perfections, particularly the riches of his mercy, which, in a state of perfect innocence, could never appear. For it is only the guilty and miserable that can need mercy. If judgment had been inflicted, justice would have been glorified, and goodness could not have been dishonoured, when nothing but justice was done upon criminals ; but the melting sounds of mercy, the noblest exercise of goodness, had never been heard. But now, by the infinite fecundity of divine wisdom, the marvellous device has been found, by which justice loses nothing of its honour, and mercy shines in all its glory. Besides, as
wisdom

wisdom hath brought new glory to God out of this evil, so likewise it has provided a more excellent state for man, and restored him again to the favour of God with glorious advantages. It is a mystery in the operations of nature, that the corruption of one thing is the generation of another ; and it is no less mysterious wisdom in the work of grace, that the fall of man should occasion his rise to a more glorious and exalted state,—to a nearer alliance with God, than he had in his state of innocence ; being as strictly united to the Son of God, the heavenly Adam, by grace, as to the earthly Adam by nature :—to a more extensive likeness of God ; being endued with such heavenly qualities of mind, as there was no object or occasion for in a state of innocence, compassion to the miserable—forgiveness of injuries—fortitude—patience—all which, as they are most lively resemblances of the divine perfections, so they are a glory and ornament to the soul :—to a more exalted happiness than that of Adam in Paradise, even to the right hand of God, ‘ where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore : ’—to a more complete security for happiness—not depending

depending upon his own brittle resolutions, but upon the infallible grace of God. Marvellously has the wisdom of God wrought for guilty men in all these respects, as the gospel of Christ doth fully declare.

4. The wisdom of God discovers itself in the honourable terms of mercy which the Gospel hath established. These are reducible to two, viz. Faith and Repentance. 1. Faith, or a firm persuasion of all that God hath recorded in his word: the most plain and speedy way to truth, particularly in those matters which the bulk of mankind have not time nor capacity to trace; and the only way in matters which the reason of man could not discover or comprehend. Plain and full information upon good authority saves the mind from all laborious and anxious inquiries, from endless disputes and janglings, from puzzling questions, from plausible sophisms, from confused reasonings, giving full assurance of the truth at once; especially when the testimony is infallible, as that of the living and true God must be: and, therefore, this is a method fit and wise to bring man most speedily and effectually to the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul.

soul. 2. Repentance, or amendment of life, is another term of salvation wisely fixed, because without it the guilty can never be fit objects of mercy, or capable of happiness. A scheme of mercy that could leave men at liberty to sin, is contrary to all the notions of wisdom the mind can conceive; nor could men believe that it came from God. For sin is folly in its nature, and misery in its consequences; the direct road to perdition, not to salvation. It is absolutely impossible, that the infinitely wise and holy God should call men to the hope of salvation, without calling them to repentance, or a change of heart and life from sin to holiness: And, therefore, repentance was the voice of the law, repentance the spirit of the Gospel, and repentance an essential part of the plan in every dispensation of mercy. Ephes. i. 4.

5. As it exceeds the power of man to work such a change of heart and life in himself, the wisdom of God is manifested in the direction and assistance he hath provided to bring his mighty purpose to effect.

1. For his direction, he hath given him such a system of precepts, such an assemblage

blage of illustrious examples, as the wisdom of man could never devise, as the history of mankind could never furnish. 2. That men, seriously concerned to be saved, might not fall short of the end of their faith, the Gospel hath done what no other law or doctrine so much as pretends. It hath assured us of sufficient help and ability to practise the duties it teacheth. And we may come boldly to the throne of grace, not only to obtain mercy, but to find grace to help in the time of need.

In the whole, and in every part, in the design and execution, we may read the hand of finished wisdom; and say, upon the fullest evidence, that God, by the Gospel, 'hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.' Ephes. i. 8.; that they whom he commissioned to instruct the world did speak wisdom.

From what hath been said, we cannot fail to observe, 1. The folly of infidels, who spend all their wit and learning to oppose the Gospel of Christ, the plan of divine wisdom, a system so friendly to virtue, which

which they pretend to patronize; a scheme so directly calculated to purify the hearts and refine the manners of mankind. Our enemies themselves being judges, let them say if ever virtue was taught, if ever it was practised to such perfection as by Christ and his Apostles. We may venture an appeal to the candour of its adversaries, if the Gospel of Christ does not contain the purest system of morals, the brightest examples of virtue, that ever appeared. They who preached it suffered in this cause the hardest poverty, the severest persecution, the vilest contempt, the blackest calumny, the most cruel death, with unshaken fortitude and magnanimity, with unwearied patience, with unruffled serenity of mind, nay, with joy and exultation of heart, and even with unfeigned affection to their very murderers: All without any views of profit, pleasure, or honour in this world. Ask your own hearts, ye pretended lovers of virtue, and say, if you would suffer as much to support her honour; and be ashamed that ye do not reverence such honourable names, listen to their doctrine, and learn to imitate

the examples of the first-rate friends of virtue; otherwise your pretences to wisdom will at last manifest your folly. But wisdom will be justified of her children.

2. Since the Gospel of Christ reveals the wise counsels of God for the salvation of men, it must be our duty, who preach it, to learn it to greater perfection, to understand more and more of the unsearchable riches of Christ, that we may speak it to others with greater success and better hope. For our capacity and fitness to instruct others, must ever bear a proportion to our own knowledge. He that is unlearned and unskilful in the word of righteousness, can never impart it into others. If we know little or nothing of what we are called to teach, little or nothing can we communicate. It is the duty of all to search the Scriptures, but more especially preachers, who are expressly called to lay out that time and these talents upon the study of the truth as it is in Jesus, which other men are obliged to spend in gaining their bread; and it is a robbing of the public, acting like faithless servants who eat their meat, and take their wages,

wages, but mind not their work, for ministers of the Gospel, to be idle, inactive, indifferent, about learning the truth, which they are so expressly and solemnly engaged to teach others. It is a flagrant dishonour done to our God and Redeemer, a reproach to our profession, an injury to the souls we have in charge, a shame to ourselves, and a blot that can never be wiped away. 'For the priests lips should keep knowledge, and the people should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.' Malachi, ii. 7. But how can he teach what he does not know? He who knows little may speak much, but little to the purpose; may confidently chat indigested matter in incoherent language, in a place, and on an occasion, when it would be indecent to check him; but, instead of edifying, he does only cheat the ignorant, disgust and fret the sensible part of his audience. Not that I would insinuate a reflection upon any of my reverend fathers and brethren; but as I am placed here by your authority to declare the truth, I would spur myself with you to run our race with patience and vigour to the end, stretching
our

our powers to acquire a more full and perfect knowledge of the important truths we are authorised to teach ; that we may be, as our good Lord speaks, ' scribes instructed ' unto the kingdom of heaven, and able to ' bring out of our treasure things new and ' old.' We are not, and dare not pretend to be, inspired as the Apostles were, that we should 'speak tongues without study, and learn truth without labour; and therefore we ought to improve all the gifts of nature in a dependence on divine grace, and employ all the advantages of learning, to give light and force to the doctrines we inculcate. For as there is a connection among all the liberal arts and sciences that renders them capable of improving one another, and makes him the greatest master in any one who knows something of all ; so they are capable of a connection with the knowledge of Christ Jesus. A man may be no less a Christian, no less a faithful and able minister of Christ, that he is well versed in human arts and sciences ; on the contrary, he may be as much more an improved Christian, or a powerful teacher, as he has of natural or
acquired

acquired abilities above other men. For the more the mind is enlarged by nature or education, it is the fitter to reach, under the direction of grace, to a full and extensive knowledge of Christ Jesus: And how can he convince himself, upon rational grounds, that the knowledge of Christ is the excellency of knowledge, who studies not to make himself capable of drawing a fair comparison between human learning and divine wisdom; to see how all the defects of philosophy are supplied by the Gospel of Christ, and all the force of sound and sober reason adopted and improved by religion? For, 'whatever things are good, just, honest, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue, any praise,' which the light of nature has discovered, the Gospel of Christ commands us to follow them, and enforces them with new and more powerful motives than the light of nature could ever devise. Indeed, it is but a reasonable service, that every science should pay a tribute to this, which dispenses the true light by which the place and value of every other science is discovered. The knowledge of
Christ

Christ is the centre to which all other knowledge should tend. It is placed among the sciences, like the sun in the system to draw all to itself. Certainly he esteems not the knowledge of Christ as he ought, who can content himself with ignorance of any thing that can contribute influence to support it. Whatever therefore we can borrow from reason, nature, art, experience, books, or men, especially the sages of antiquity, we ought to collect with all possible care and application, to enrich our minds with science, that we may be able to teach others the great doctrines of salvation with greater advantage. Every thing that can enlarge or illuminate our thoughts, or give life, truth, and sense to our language, we ought to employ in the service of truth, and spend all the treasures of human learning to enrich the doctrines of divine wisdom.

3. To the hearers of the Gospel, let me only say, in the words of the Apostle James, i. 21. 'Laying apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls.' Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE.

JAMES, iii. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

TWO marks of sincerity in religion the Apostle delivers, verses 26, and 27, of his first chapter: 1. The government of the tongue; 2. Sympathy, and purity of life. The last he treats of in the second chapter; the first in this; where he smartly reproves the vain pretensions of some to greater wisdom and knowledge than others, while they covered the blackest vices with the most venerable names, and bewrayed the corruption

ruption of their hearts by the virulence of their tongues, to the dishonour of God, to the hurt of men, to the reproach of that religion they professed, and the scandal of that character they assumed.

To remedy this evil, the Apostle sets himself, in the spirit of meekness, to expose the shocking inconsistency of such conduct, and to point out the only way by which a man can justify his pretensions to wisdom and knowledge. 'Who is a wise man,' says he, 'and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew, out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom.' True wisdom, he means, which he particularly describes in the text; but as a proper foil to set it off with its due lustre, and recommend it with advantage to the heart, he contrasts it with that false, pretended wisdom, in which some did glory; the vicious nature, the bitter fruits, and the black original of which he paints, verses 14, 15, 16. But true wisdom has another rise, another nature, other characters, and other effects. It is from above, pure, peaceable, &c.

What

What I propose from these words, through divine assistance, is,

I. To suggest what I apprehend is the just notion of wisdom in general.

II. Represent the excellency of this wisdom which is from above.

III. Illustrate the characters here given of it.

IV. Conclude with a few reflections.

I. Wisdom, in general, seems to consist in fixing right ends, using proper means, and distinguishing the particular seasons and circumstances of action.

1. Wisdom includes a fixing of right ends, and judging well of the true worth of things. The ends must be both well chosen and fitly placed. When several things solicit our affection and esteem, it is the work of wisdom to decide and to chuse what is good, to prefer what is better, and its last aim to settle upon what is best. The end must be good, otherwise the choice can never be wise. It is the work of ignorance to judge wrong, and the device of folly to

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34 *The Wisdom that is from Above.*

chuse ill: And, as there is a difference between enjoyments essentially good, both a real and comparative excellency of things, for the same reason that wisdom fixes upon a good purpose, it will observe a just gradation in its choice, and establish a due subordination of ends, the inferior to the superior, and all to the supreme, the point beyond which it cannot look, the center in which the soul must rest, that is, goodness itself, absolutely perfect. Thus wisdom leads the soul unto God, the chief good, and would forfeit its character by resting in a lower aim. And thus our holy religion shows its goodness and wisdom, in directing our choice to this as the ultimate scope of all our actions; 1. Cor. x. 31. 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' The laws of wisdom can never allow that we should serve any purpose to the prejudice of this. But all other designs subservient to this we may, we ought, and wisdom demands we should, pursue steadily and in due order; the principal of which are, the good of men and our own happiness, which God has inseparably

separably connected with his own honour. These are the great ends of our being. We are made for God, and made for one another; and in promoting the glory of God, and the welfare of men, we secure our own happiness. This is the original law of our nature, 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.' This is the work, these are the schemes of a good man, the grand plan of wisdom, to which it obliges every faculty, every talent, every enjoyment, every opportunity, to bow.

2. True wisdom includes the using proper means to attain those ends. However good his design may be, he cannot be wise that takes wrong measures to pursue it. In this case, the folly of the execution must blast the wisdom of the design. If it be wise and well judged to fix upon a good end, it is wise to chuse those means that are most proper and suitable to it, and foolish to promote it by base and unworthy methods. It is doubtless very foolish to think of advancing the honour of God by means which he forbids; to support or promote religion by lying, slander, and deceit; or
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to do evil that good may come. No wiser could this be than for a sick man to drink poison to procure health. It is folly to pretend to promote the happiness of men by persecution, to convince their minds of the goodness of our principles by the injustice and severity of our proceedings, or to kill their bodies that we may save their souls. If it be foolish to reason with beasts, it is no less so to use brutish methods with reasonable creatures. A man may raise his interest and reputation, even in this world, by fair and honourable means; and in that he is wise: but to do it on the ruins of another, and at the expence of a good conscience, must be as foolish as it is wicked. A wise and good man will seek to advance the honour of God, the good of men, and his own happiness, by such means as the laws of God and a good conscience require, and study, like the Psalmist, ci. 2. 'to walk
' wisely in a perfect way, and with a perfect heart.'

3. True wisdom distinguishes the particular seasons and circumstances of action. All times and all circumstances will not bear

bear all things. It is very possible to blow up the best laid scheme by an ill-seasoned execution. There is a time for every thing under the sun : And every thing is beautiful in its time ; Eccl. iii. 1. & 2. There is a peculiar fitness between the end and the opportunity, which it well becomes a wise man to watch ; for who, that slips his opportunity, can promise that time and things shall ever meet so seasonably again ? Since time will not wait upon us, we should wait upon it, and mark its motions favourable to good designs, otherwise a disappointment will testify the folly of our conduct. We may even be led into a snare by attending a plain duty in a wrong time, and a wrong place. Moses erred in spending that time in prayer which should have been spent in action ; and, if God himself had not corrected his mistake, all Israel might have felt the bad effects of it ; Exod. xiv. 15. Every duty to God claims a proper time, and so likewise every duty to our neighbours and ourselves. To gain upon men for their good, there are soft times of address, which a mere accident may present,
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when a word spoken fitly will have greater weight than the most powerful arguments on other occasions. These a wise man will carefully observe, and strike the iron while it is hot and capable of yielding. Thus wisdom consists in fixing right ends, chusing proper means, and observing the peculiar seasons and circumstances of action.

II. The second thing I proposed, is to represent the excellency of this wisdom. Did time allow, I believe I might convince my audience, that even a rough hand can draw a lovely picture of this glorious, this God-like quality in the soul. If we think on the noble extraction of wisdom, the excellent objects about which it is employed, the principal end it promotes, and the amiable characters here given of it, the beauty and excellence of it will appear.

I. The origination of wisdom is from above. It is the offspring of God, the author of every good and perfect gift. He alone that breathed a spirit into man, inspires him with true wisdom. Job, xxxii.

8. The highest character that heathens could

could give their philosophy, to recommend it to mankind, was, that it came down from heaven. All the religious forgeries that ever abused the world have borrowed this original to sanctify their pretensions. And it has been found, upon experience, in all nations and ages, that nothing could ever approve itself to reason under the venerable name of wisdom, without pretending at least its descent from heaven. An undoubted proof that true wisdom comes from thence. In this lies the glory and excellence of our religion, that it was revealed from heaven, and has vouched its pretensions to this, upon the clearest evidence that the nature of things will admit.

2. It heightens the excellency of wisdom, that the objects about which it is employed, are suitable to its sublime original. A man of high birth may have a mean soul, and a man of vulgar extraction may have a larger mind, but true wisdom claims at once a noble descent, and a noble employment. Its business is above the world; the perishing pleasures, riches, and honours of this life are too low, too little for a wise mind.

mind. He labours for immortality ; he converses with God, the greatest and best of all beings, and delights to trace him through his works of creation, providence, redemption ; to see how God was in Christ reconciling himself to the world,—saving sinners without the least allowance to sin,—restoring the forfeited dignities and privileges of our nature with glorious advantages,—calling us to glory and to virtue,—opening a new and living way of access to him through the veil of our Redeemer's flesh. Here wisdom reads with pleasure and profit the mystery of godliness, and counts the knowledge of Christ, the excellency of knowledge, Phil. iii. 8. Here it discovers all that is worthy of God to teach, or of man to learn, and furnishes an education becoming the candidates of immortality, employs our thoughts about God and divine things, and sets all our active powers in pursuit of our duty and our happiness. These are objects worthy of the attention of the wise, and will abundantly reward their labours.

3. The great end it advances, shews the excellency of wisdom. It not only sets us on the way, but puts us in the possession of true happiness at last. From heaven it came, and thither it returns again, where it will make us wise as the angels of God ; where the understanding shall embrace infinite truth, and the will infinite goodness ; where all the seeming irregularities of providence below shall appear to be harmonious ; where all the intricate windings and turnings of its course shall be unravelled ; the connections and dependencies of things unfolded ; and where all the crosses and afflictions we endured shall be matter of praise and thanksgiving to God. Wisdom in its rise, progress, and issue, is altogether lovely.—But

III. Mark the divine lineaments of it here touched by the pen of the Apostle, and so form a judgment of its beauty and excellence. It is

1. Pure. It is like the blessed author of it. It is the image of God in the soul ; resembles him in that which is the beauty

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and

and glory of his nature, his holiness. This is the first character given of it, and justly entitled to the precedency. For purity is, in the description of wisdom, like the head, from whence the spirits flow, that give life and action to all the members of the body. And, as in drawing a picture, the artist begins with the head, because there the life, the grace, the likeness of the person most sensibly appear, and it is the model by which the several members are proportioned; so the Apostle begins the description of wisdom with purity, because the virtue and value of all the following characters depend upon it, and the life, the beauty, the likeness of wisdom are most visible in it. A heart pure from vile and vicious affections, makes a pure life, forms a graceful character, a striking resemblance of the Deity, and shows the man to be wise. How great a dignity, how great a happiness is this? 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' said our Saviour, 'for they shall see God.' Mat. v. 8. They only can be fit to see him, who are like him, and 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Heb. xii. 14. But
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how wretched and inglorious is the state and character of vitious minds? where every imperious lust, under the pretence of liberty, grows a tyrant, and dooms an immortal soul a drudge to vile affections; where the passions of a devil, or the pleasures of a beast, debauch the noble powers of our nature. Vice is the disorder, the disgrace, and death of the soul. But purity is to the soul, what the soul is to the body, the light, the life, and health of it. If we are pure in heart, we live the life of saints, we live the life of angels, we live the life of God. Therefore we are commanded to be holy, as he is holy, in all manner of conversation, and if we are wise we will learn to obey. Our religion is all graduated upon this meridian; its doctrines, precepts, promises, examples, are all calculated to promote purity as the only way to teach us wisdom. 'Our Redeemer gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people.' Tit. ii. 14.

2. It is peaceable.—Peace is the fruit of holiness, and, therefore, properly placed after it. A pure conscience keeps a calm breast, and disposes the soul to seek and keep

keep peace with others. But impurity is a principle of sedition in the soul, raising tumults and disorders within and without. Indeed, as there may be some pleasure in sin, but no tranquillity, so there may be some kind of agreement among wicked men, but no true peace: where the mind is disordered, the actions will be irregular. James iv. 1. 'From whence come wars and ' fightings? come they not of your lusts ' that war in your members? But true piety extirpates the seeds of contention, and, as it calms and regulates the passions and affections within, makes a man cautious to prevent, and careful to heal breaches among men. And a wise man he is for others, but especially for himself, who is thus disposed and thus employed. He is laying up provision both for time and eternity; recommending himself both to God and man. Mat. v. 9. Who does not love, who does not commend a peaceable temper and behaviour? He is a comfort to himself, a blessing to the world, a friend to the God of Peace, that studies peace; and shews himself endued with the wisdom that is from

from above. Prov. iii. 17. As it is pure, so it is peaceable.

3. It is gentle, that is, equal and moderate.—Equity is a softening the rigour of law, a determining in cases not provided for in the mildest manner, and, where the matter is doubtful, choosing rather the favourable than the severe side. When justice has no fixed rule to decide a case, wisdom gives humanity or gentleness the casting voice, which puts the mildest constructions upon mens actions that they can possibly bear, and makes all the allowances for human weakness that ought to be made. Considering that we also are in the body, and liable to infirmities, it is but wise to make such allowance to others, as in reason we could wish to ourselves. This is the spirit and law of our religion, this the voice of that wisdom which is from above. Gal. vi. 2. ‘Bear ye one anothers burdens, and ‘so fulfil the law of Christ.’ And as this temper fits well on every christian, so, particularly, on every minister of the Gospel. 2. Tim. ii. 24.-26. This is the fruit of the divine spirit. Gal. v. 22. This was an eminent

ment branch of the character of our Redeemer, Who that ever heard of his blessed name, has not heard of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. 2. Cor. x. 1.

4. It is easy to be intreated, ready to oblige, pliable and condescending to any thing for the good of others, that is consistent with a good conscience.—This was another illustrious character in our blessed Redeemer, upon which the Apostle builds this exhortation. Rom. xv. 2. ‘Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification; for even Christ pleased not himself.’ And this lesson the Apostle himself practised to good purpose. 1. Cor. ix. 19.-22. In all matters of indifference that could gratify men for their good, no man was more ductile and easy to be intreated. But, at the same time, no man more resolute and averse to yield than he, when he was sensible that yielding would do harm. Circumcision was a thing indifferent in itself, but when he saw that false brethren intended to establish it for a term of communion, he would not give place by subjection, no, not for an hour. Gal. ii. 3.-5. Eating in company with Jews only

only, was no crime ; but when he saw it was intended to exclude Gentile Christians from communion with them, he resisted even the Apostle Peter to his face, and convicted him of dissimulation. Gal. iv. 13, 14. Where he knew it would do harm, he was too wise to yield even a matter of indifference ; for that would have been pleasing men at the expence of displeasing Christ, which he was firmly resolved never to do : ‘ And, therefore,’ says he, Gal. i. 10, ‘ do I seek to please men ? for, if I yet ‘ pleased men, I should not be the servant ‘ of Christ.’ For the wisdom that is from above sees a wide difference between silliness and condescension. We are to be wise as serpents, and harmless, not silly like doves, foolish birds that hasten to the snare : a character by which the folly of Ephraim is represented, Hof. vii. 11. ‘ Ephraim is a ‘ silly dove without heart.’ That facility of temper which betrays into any mean or base compliance, wants nothing but temptation to compliment the world with our religion. Such a soft and supple mind can never be wise. No man is more affable,
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more obsequious, more generous, condescending, and ready to oblige others for their good, than a wise man is ; but, at the same time, no man more inexorable and peremptory to deny them what he sees for their hurt.

5. It is full of mercy and good fruits ; compassionate and liberal ; not resting in good words and fair speeches, but doing good works, the sweet and substantial effects of piety and mercy ; easily feeling and readily relieving the wants of the miserable.— A blessed temper this ! sweet to the giver, sweet to the receiver, acceptable to God, and approved of men ; Job, xxix. 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 ; and xxx. 25. If it be wise to pity and supply the wants of the body, no less surely the necessities of the soul. The miseries of human minds have undoubtedly the first title to our mercy : and it is our happiness, who are advanced to the ministry, that we can never want opportunities of venting the tender feelings of a kind and compassionate heart this way, if we are wise to improve them. Our office calls, and our occasions invite us, to
instruct

instruct the ignorant and them that are out of the way, to support the weak, to reclaim the vicious, to comfort them that are cast down, to bind up the broken heart, to heal the wounded spirit, to encourage the fearful, to convince the unbelieving, and to take them on every side for the good of souls. In this lies the glory of our office, in this the wisdom of our way. Prov. xi. 30. 'He that winneth souls is wise;' and Jam. v. 19. 20. What a glory, what a happiness is this; what a rational and refined pleasure must it give to the mind here; what unspeakable joy and rejoicing in the day when the Lord Jesus shall appear!

6. That we may not be blinded or biassed by prejudice, that we may not confine our good opinions or good deeds to any one party of men, the Apostle adds, Wisdom is without partiality, will not suffer us to judge men's characters by their circumstances, to think well or ill of them by external appearances, and treat them accordingly. This is what he calls 'having the
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‘spect of persons;’ chap. ii. 1,—4; concluding him a good man that makes a fair show, and a bad man that makes a poor appearance. This is the way of the world. Upon this base principle these very men, of whom it is said the world was not worthy, have been treated in the most cruel and scornful manner, and had the least share of either justice or mercy. The most blessed person that ever the sun beheld, was hated, slandered, despised, and persecuted even unto death, merely because he took no external form or comeliness to recommend him to the vain opinions of a blind and partial world, and would not chime in with the corrupt tenets and practices of a prevailing party. However other men may judge, Christians may learn from the history of their master to remember his precept. John, vii. 24. ‘Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.’ If we forget this counsel, we must be partial, attached to wrong opinions to the prejudice of truth, knit to particular persons and parties to the hurt of other men. But the wisdom that is from above is without partiality,
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and shows an indiscriminate regard to goodness, on whatever side it be, and in whatever circumstances, whether clothed with the rags of poverty, or disguised with the arts of slander.

7. Without hypocrisy;—the finishing character of wisdom. There is no good quality but may be counterfeited. Men are capable of making high pretences to purity and peace, while their hearts are not sincere. There is as little wisdom as honesty in this; for, though it should never be known unto men, it is well known unto God; and there is a time coming, too, when both men and angels shall see it in the clearest light. Besides, the closest dissembler can hardly escape discovery even in this world. He imposes a hard task upon himself, who undertakes to make all the world believe, through a course of years, what he cannot believe himself. He must be ever acting a part, ever in pain, carefully watching every word, every smile, every gesture, every motion, for fear of a discovery; and, through such a various and complicated scene as a lifetime, it is a thousand

thousand to one but the force continually put upon nature discover the machinery beneath, and expose the artificer of fraud to the contempt and hatred of men, as well as to the terrible indignation of God. A hypocrite is a fool even upon his own principles. His wisdom is to hide well, and yet he takes a work in hand that he cannot hide. True wisdom can never be divided from integrity. No man can be wise without being honest. He that walketh uprightly walketh surely. Cheerful and pleasant is the life, quiet and peaceable the death of such a man; Pf. xxxvii. 37. and 1. Sam. xii. 2, 3, 4. and 2. Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

What a lovely form, what an excellent gift is this, which the Apostle hath delineated! Wisdom has the good thoughts and good word of all the world. All are in love with the very name of wisdom. It is the wise man's choice, and the fool's fancy; for the greatest fool on earth cannot be pleased with himself without believing he is wise.

And now, from what has been said, it fairly follows,

1. That prayer is an indispensable duty on every soul of man. True wisdom is from above; it is the gift of God; and no man can have the least room or reason to expect it without asking. 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God,' Jam. i. 5. It is a wise counsel, what we should cheerfully embrace, and never forget; Prov. iii. 5, 6.

2. How foolish, sinful, and contrary to our holy religion are all uncharitable principles and practices! Light is not more inconsistent with darkness than these are with the Christian religion, which is wholly calculated to promote love and good-will, peace and harmony among men. The blessed Author of it is the God of love and peace. The great high-Priest of our profession is the Prince of Peace. The spirit and tendency of it is peace. The breath, the language, the meaning of it is peace. The righteous precepts, the precious promises, and even the awful threatenings of it, are intended to promote and secure peace and good-will among men. The way it leads us is the way of peace, and the world where it lands

us at last is a world of love and peace. As Christians, fighting is no part of our profession. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Our profession obliges us to conquer our enemies by kindness. Calm and sober reasoning, patience, meekness, candour and affability, gentleness and moderation, love and pity, prayers and supplications, are the instruments wherewith we are commanded to subdue those that hate and abuse us. We may, we ought to overcome evil, not with evil, but with good. This is the law of retaliation that heavenly wisdom allows. ‘ Let no man render evil
‘ for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrarywise, blessing; knowing that ye are
‘ thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing;’ 1. Pet. iii. 9.—‘ Now, may the
‘ God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great
‘ Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you
‘ perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to
‘ whom be glory for ever and ever;’ Heb. xiii. 20, 21. Amen.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING.

HEBREWS, xii. 24.

*(Ye are come.) To the blood of sprinkling,
that speaketh better things than that of
Abel.*

IN TWO PARTS.

THE writer of this Epistle having mentioned in the preceding chapter many illustrious examples of faith and patience, shows in this with what intention he did so, viz. to exhort and encourage us to be followers of them, but especially of Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith: and, to enforce the exhortation, he shows the great advantage and good end of the various afflictions that God measures

*T.S. The author mistakes the meaning of this Text.
It was not Abel's blood who was slain by his Brother
Cain; but his Sacrifice [though pleasing to God]
which was inferior to Christ's Blood, of which Paul
speaks in the Text.*

measures out to believers in the world ; citing and illustrating several passages in the Old Testament Scriptures to this purpose from verse 5 to 12. Wherefore, verses 12 and 13, he incites them to behave with manly vigour and resolution, in the face of all the trials they could meet ; not like timorous and dead-hearted creatures, whose hands drop down with astonishment, and joints shake at the sight of danger ; but to march straight on in their way to a better world in the face of all opposition, heartening the weak and wounded to follow : as a proper expedient to unting the persecuting spirit of their enemies, or at least to blunt the edge of their rancour, he advises, verse 14, ‘ to follow peace with all men.’ Not, however, on any terms ; but only as far as it is consistent with holiness of heart and life : for, if men will not be at peace with us, unless we forfeit our peace with God, better all the bonds of unity with mankind burst than that the terms of our communion with God should be broken : better never see a peaceful look from man than be denied the gracious countenance of God :
and,

and, therefore, that they should be concerned above all things to maintain their peace with God, and carefully guard against every thing in heart or life that might tend to break or disturb it; that they should be more careful to see their own souls go right than to have the world about them quiet and easy. ('Looking diligently,' says he, 'lest any man fail of the grace, or fall 'from the love of God.') Lest there be any corrupt inclinations rooted in your hearts, and sprouting up in your life, that may provoke his displeasure, disturb your peace with him, and defile others. Particularly, verse 16, Beware of the lusts of uncleanness and covetous desires after the things of the world; remembering what consummate fatal folly it must be to endanger our birth-right in heaven for a morsel of bread in the world: and, very much to the purpose, he reminds them of the incurable folly of Esau in a matter of less importance, who, to gratify a raging appetite, sold the birth-right in his father's family for a mess of meat, and was too late in discovering the folly which remorse and tears

could

could never amend. And, to drive home the exhortation, he grasps another weapon in his hand; and, from verse 18, urges it strongly, from a consideration of the mighty advantages of a gospel dispensation, contrasting it with that of the law, to cast a stronger light upon his argument. The comparison consists of two principal parts:

1. That the glory of God was more illustriously displayed in the New than in the Old Testament dispensation; for therein was only a dark and distant hint given of spiritual and invisible things, under the veil of things felt and seen. Thus, for instance, Mount Sinai, whereon the great God did once signify the presence of his glorious Majesty, with such a retinue of terrors as earth never beheld, was only a dark representation of the glorious place of his residence above, who dwelleth in light inaccessible and full of glory, to which no mortal can approach. The earthly Jerusalem was but an emblem of heaven, the city of the living God. The church, or vast congregation of persons of different ranks and orders, whose names and families were regularly recorded in the registers

gisters of genealogy at Jerufalem, all under one King to judge, and one High-Priest to mediate between God and them, was but a type of that innumerable company of blefſed angels, the firſt-born church of God re-giſtered in heaven, and the ſouls of juſt men made perfect there, under the immediate eye of God, the higheſt judge of all, and of Chriſt the true and only mediator between God and man. But the Goſpel, which hath brought life and immortality to light, hath revealed all theſe to us, not in dark figures, hard to be underſtood, but in the moſt clear and intelligible language; ſo that even a child now may underſtand what is the ultimate deſign of God with reſpect to his church on earth, viz. to bring them all at the laſt to the place of his glorious preſence in heaven.

2. That the ſpirit of the Goſpel diſpenſation is far more mild and gentle than that of the law. Severe and awful threats of vengeance were the main arguments made uſe of to enforce obedience to that diſpenſation; and the ſpirit of the law ran in the tremendous ſtile of the delivery. But the
ſpirit

spirit of the Gospel speaks in the sweet and melting accents of love and mercy : and, therefore, if we study not to walk answerable to the grace of the Gospel, the conclusion cuts to the quick ; we are doubly guilty, and arm both justice and mercy against ourselves : and as the mercy, as well as justice of God, is most clearly manifested in the death of Christ, he reserves this most powerful consideration to give the finishing stroke to his argument, that it might not only persuade, but leave a lasting impression behind it. *Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling* ; that is, the blood of Christ, called the blood of sprinkling by way of eminence, to denote the singular virtue of it to purify the soul. This epithet is borrowed from the method of atonement under the law ; Levit. xvi. 14, 15, 18 : and it hints a comparison between the precious blood of Christ, and the blood of bulls and goats sprinkled to expiate sin, which had no virtue in itself to take away sin, nor indeed was of any use or value farther than it referred to the blood of Christ, in which alone lies all the power of cleansing sinful souls.

fouls. Sprinkling the blood of beasts under the law was cleansing in figure, but shedding the blood of Christ is cleansing in fact; and therefore it is dignified with an article of special significance, *The Blood of Sprinkling*. And, as the sanctifying virtue of the blood of Christ is hereby signified, so the saving efficacy of it is expressed in the following clause. It speaks good things for sinners. But, that he might convey this truth in a more striking manner, he offers it in a comparative view: *It speaketh better things than the blood of Abel*.

What I propose further on this subject, through divine assistance, is,

I. To illustrate the force of the comparison here stated between the blood of Christ and that of Abel.

II. Conclude with some inferences from what may be said.

I. To illustrate the force of the comparison here stated, it is proper to observe, 1. That the stile of it is borrowed from the original history, wherein the blood of Abel
is

is represented as speaking from the ground unto God, which, by attributing speech unto blood, that cannot speak, shows what it would have done if it could have spoken; Gen. iv. 10.

2. That the force and moment of that branch of the opposition which is here made the rule and measure of the other, is to be particularly considered: for, if the blood of Abel had spoken but faintly, or to little purpose, or upon a trifling cause, and its pleadings had been but little regarded, the argument would have fallen to the ground; and it would have been nothing to the purpose of proving the powerful efficacy of the blood of Christ, to show its pleadings superior to the weak speech of Abel's, no more than it would prove an advocate extraordinary in his profession, to compare him with one of low parts and little reputation. But it is a sure way of proving a character extraordinary, to evince it above one held in the highest esteem: and so it must be a clear demonstration of the extraordinary power of the blood of Christ in pleading with God, to prove it stronger and of a better sort,

fort, than the pleading of the blood of Abel, if that was extraordinary, as indeed it was, and will appear in a little to be, if we consider,

I. The subject upon which it pled.—It was not upon a slight foundation, upon a trivial matter, unworthy of the ears and attention of, a judge but upon a matter of high importance, that demanded, justly demanded, the interposition of the Supreme Judge of heaven and earth. The blood of Abel cried out of wrong that deserved well to be heard; it libelled most atrocious, unnatural violence, cruelty, murder, and bloodshed of a brother on a brother. A heavy charge indeed, a doleful dittay, a sad and severe indictment to the unhappy murderer! The accusations of blood, and a brother's blood, are dreadful!

Now, it is the equity and importance of a cause, and not the art and address of the advocate, that gives force and success to his pleading, with a discerning and righteous judge. Though, indeed, an able advocate, by the dexterity of his genius, can give a plausible appearance of equity to acts of iniquity,

iniquity, and the air of importance to a trifle, and though a good cause may suffer by a bad pleader, yet the main point of eloquence lies in the goodness of the cause. But here is such a subject to plead on as needs not the arts of rhetoric to give it a strong appearance of iniquity, and to awaken the indignation of the Judge; nor can it lose its weight in the weakest hands: a cause that pleads for itself, and must prevail upon the simple evidence of fact. The very sound of murder must stun the ears and strike the heart of every impartial judge: the voice of innocent blood must plead with irresistible power and certain success at a tribunal of justice, or nothing will, and particularly the blood of righteous Abel. For the shedding of innocent blood is an act of cruelty at which nature itself stands aghast, and humanity shudders at the thought: a sin punished with death in all nations and ages of the world: a sin that so fiercely torments the conscience, that it has often extorted a confession from the murderer himself, though there was no mortal eye to witness his wickedness:

wickedness : a sin so hateful in the sight of God, that though he sees it meet to be the silent witness of other sins till the day of final reckoning come, yet at this he often speaks out, and has very frequently taken uncommon steps of providence to bring secret murder to light and punishment, even in this world : a sin for which God allowed no mercy, and would rather have violence done to his own altar than suffer wilful murder to pass unpunished ; *Exod. xxiv. 14. Deut. xix. 13.* Such a crying iniquity it is in the judgment of God and man. But shedding the blood of Abel was not only murder, but of the blackest kind, and raised to a most dreadful pitch of wickedness by uncommon aggravations, which the circumstances of the fact make evident.

(1.) It was the first murder, and it is a singular aggravation of any sin to be the beginner of it, whether we consider the conscience of the sinner, or the bad tendency and influence of the fact. Even in this depraved state of our nature, a man becomes not extremely wicked all at once, but by degrees ; nor attempts the first acts of iniquity with

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the same ease as those to which he is accustomed. Nature cannot entirely cast off shame and fear, these strong barriers of innocence, at the thoughts of perpetrating a bold and daring impiety, with which it is entirely unacquainted: It must cost the mind a violent struggle to venture a new kind of villainy; and as strong as the renitency of nature is, as deep must the guilt of destroying it be. So this being not only the first murder this man committed, but the first ever the world heard of, we may well suppose he did the fatal deed against very strong remonstrances to the contrary; and the history of the fact supports the conclusion. The secrecy of it shows the horror and perturbation of the murderer. For if he had no sense of fear or shame at the thoughts of committing it, why seek an opportunity to do it in the field, in a place where no man could witness? Nor was it done in the first start of passion, without time to reflect: It was hastily conceived, but deliberately contrived and executed. He waited an opportunity to meet his brother alone in the field, and then rose up against

gainst him, and slew him; Gen. iv. 8. where it is evident, from the strain of the narration, that this was some time after their offering sacrifices. Then they were met for public worship; now for private conference. Then they were in the place appointed for divine service, where, no doubt, others were present, though not mentioned; now they were in the field remote from the view of others. Besides that, we see a conference between the Lord and Cain interposed between the time that he first conceived wrath and revenge against Abel, and the time that he slew him; which is another circumstance that fearfully aggravates his guilt. While his heart is meditating murder, and his looks threatening revenge, God himself vouchsafes to expostulate with him concerning his sin and danger, to withdraw him from his wicked purpose. But he rejected the counsel of God against himself, did violence upon his own conscience, and broke through the strongest bonds of humanity and natural affection; circumstances which not a little heighten

heighten the guilt of a crime dreadful without them.

But the guilt is further increased by the bad tendency and influence of the fact. To be first in any notorious transgression of law has ever been deemed worthy of severe vengeance in the judgment of all wise and well founded governments ; because it is a most audacious way of tempting others to transgress, and laying down a precedent for them to follow ; and justice requires, that they who first gave example to sin should be made an example of suffering : that the first leaders in mischief should be most severely punished. It is a singular aggravation of sin of any kind to be the inventor of it, as being peculiar to one only. What renders Satan the Prince of Devils, but that he was the author of evil ? Though all other infernal spirits were as completely wicked as he in all other respects, yet this circumstance is a dreadful aggravation of guilt, which the most wicked spirit beside cannot share with him. Accordingly our Lord mentions it as such, calling him not only a liar and murderer,

as all his infernal legions are, but the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning. And as Satan was the first murderer among angels, the first destroyer of souls, so Cain was the first that ever shed the blood of man. This makes his guilt similar to that of the very chief of devils.

(2.) It was the murder of a brother by the hands of a brother. God has laid the social affections deep in our nature, which are the great bonds of union, order, and government among men, and are kindled and kept alive by commerce, acquaintance, neighbourhood, alliance, relation; and the nearer these connections are, the sweeter and stronger is the sympathy of nature. He that formed the heart of man has tempered it so, that the strictest relation should have the most powerful attraction; and particularly intended, that brethren, or men formed in the same womb, bred in the same house, entitled to the same privileges, should 'love one another with a pure heart fervently.' Of all men, those who are descended of the same parents are formed for mutual love and mutual assistance. A
brother,

brother, says Solomon, is born for adversity ; and for a brother to hate a brother is a direct violation of the laws of God and nature ; but to shed the blood of his brother is a kind of self-murder, a monstrous impiety, that puts all mankind in arms against the bloody man, and calls for heavy vengeance from the hand of God.

(3.) It was the murder of an only brother, at least it does not appear that Adam had any other son at this time, though we read that he begat sons and daughters afterward ; Gen. v. 4. Had Cain but had the bowels of a man, and Abel had died by the hand of God, the loss of an only brother would have awakened grief to excess in his mind : a loss that, for ought he knew, was irreparable. But, void of all humanity, he cut off the life of his brother from the earth, though he left not himself another behind him. This could not fail to add iniquity to his sin, and give edge to justice against him.

(4.) It was the murder of an innocent and righteous brother. Though a wicked man may be murdered, that is, slaughtered
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for a crime of which he is not guilty, or for an offence that deserves not death, or by the hands of those that have no right to judge him, and though the murder, even of such a man, be a heinous sin in the sight of God, yet the murder of the righteous is still more provoking in his eyes. For such are acceptable to God and useful to men. And therefore our Saviour mentions it as a peculiar aggravation in the murders committed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that they, of all the people on earth, were notable for the murder of prophets and righteous men; Matthew, xxiii. 34, 35. And the Psalmist tells us in the cxvi. Psalm, 15th verse. 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.' And the writer of this Epistle, speaking of this very matter, 11th chapter, verse 7, says, 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it, he being dead yet speaketh. His righteousness gave language and accent to the pleadings of his blood after his death, and exasperated

perated the wrath of God against the murderer.

(5.) The circumstances of the human race at that time augmented the guilt of this murder. The world was in its infant state: Men were as yet but few in number, and needed much all the help and friendly offices they could possibly administer to one another, in order to support and propagate their own species, which a few such violences would have utterly extinguished in that early period. Many a time since, alas! men have butchered more of their own kind in a day than we can well suppose the whole human kind at that time to amount to; and the loss of one man then, and a good and great man too, was more than the loss of thousands now. The life of Abel could be of no less importance to the common good of mankind than that of David to the Jewish nation, of whom his soldiers said, "thou art worth ten thousand of us." For, indeed, a life is valuable according to its influence on the general benefit of larger or lesser societies; and the assassination of kings and chief men in a state

state has ever been resented with uncommon vengeance. It fires whole nations at once ; for it must put the whole body into disorder when the head is wounded. All must take part in the death of one with whose life their interests are connected ; and this the conscience of Cain dictated unto him, when it was awakened, as a terrible aggravation of his iniquity ; that the murder of Abel was striking at the whole human race, and would justly raise them all in arms against him. ‘ For,’ said he, it shall ‘ come to pass, that every one that meet-
‘ eth me shall slay me.’

(6.) The great grief and sorrow of heart it behoved to give to their parents was another accession to the guilt of this murder. How would it pierce the hearts of Adam and Eve to hear of death at any rate, even in its gentlest form, and in the person of their most remote descendant, as being the seal of their apostacy, and the just demerit of their transgression ! Though they had heard death in sentence, they never before heard it in execution. It was a thing quite new to them ; and death, in

any shape, must strike them very sensibly in the first instance that ever they could hear. But that death should make his first entrance into the world in such horrid form, how could it fail to throw their minds into convulsions of grief and confusion ! Notwithstanding all the doleful tragedies of this sort to which the world has been accustomed, yet the very report of any new instance of this kind gives a sensible shock to human nature in every breast; it is as a sword piercing the heart of a father or mother, to hear such sad and heavy tidings concerning their children : And it would surely be the more afflicting to Adam and Eve that at that time the like had not been heard or thought of. Jacob was so strongly moved with the loss of his dear Joseph, upon the mere apprehension that he was torn with wild beasts, that he refused to be comforted ; and said, he would go down to his grave mourning. In what tender strains did David lament the death of a rebellious son in the field of battle ? And had Abel died in like manner, Can we suppose

suppose Adam and Eve less capable of like tender impressions from the death of their good son, the friend and favourite of God, the joy of his father, and the darling of his mother? But it would have been some consolation, in comparison, had Abel been torn by wild beasts, or fallen by the hand of enemies. It had been a lighter affliction to his parents, if the blood of Abel had been shed by any creature but Cain. They were cut to the quick with a double wound at one blow. To have a son the murderer even of an absolute stranger is, of itself, afflicting enough; to have a son, a good son, a delightful son, murdered, is a very painful stroke to a parent's heart; but to have one son a murderer, and another murdered in one day, with one stroke, not by the hands of a stranger, but of a brother, an elder brother, an only brother, and the two first brethren that ever the world saw, in whom the very roots of fraternity were first planted, were singular causes of grief indeed, and an uncommon violence to the tenderest strings of parental affection. The bloody Cain wounded his parents with
many

many sorrows through the sides of his brother, and at once quenched not only the bowels of a brother, but the love and allegiance of a son, which heightened his guilt, and accumulated his sin unto judgment. His wickedness was so much the heavier by the weight of his parents affliction, which the sacred history seems to insinuate, by mentioning the joy that Eve expressed at the birth of Seth. 'For,' said she, 'God hath appointed me another seed 'in the place of Abel, whom Cain slew;' Gen. iv. 25.

(7.) The motive that induced him to slay his brother was a fearful aggravation of his crime. It was not for any injury that Abel had done him, not through suspicion of any bad intention he had against him, not for birth-right, nor inheritance, nor riches, nor honour, but merely because he was a better man than himself; because God loved him, and accepted his offering, but rejected his own. The man was wroth because God did not approve the wicked, and condemn the righteous; and slew his brother, because he was not as bad a man

as himself. This was truly a hellish disposition, as the Apostle John understands it, 1 Epistle, iii. 12. 'Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? Because his own deeds were evil, and his brother's righteous.' This, with a witness, was adding iniquity to his sin, and urging justice to more than ordinary vengeance.

So great and many, so singular and uncommon, were the aggravations of this crime, that we need not demur to say, that it was the most atrocious murder that ever was committed next to that of the Son of God himself. If ever the innocent blood of mere man deserved to be heard at the seat of judgment, it was that of Abel: If ever murderer deserved judgment without mercy, it was Cain. Set the blood of Abel in competition with the blood of any mere mortal, and justice requires it should be first heard, and most remarkably avenged; both God and man were most nearly concerned in the success of this cause.

Thus we see the subject upon which the blood of Abel did plead with God was
murder,

murder, and of the deepest dye. But the blood of Christ speaks quite another and a better thing for them that believe. It pleads merit, not murder: For though the blood of Christ was unjustly shed by men, and they were indeed the betrayers and murderers of the Lord of Glory, yet it was by the express appointment of God, and with his own consent, that he might satisfy divine justice, in his own person, for the sins of his people; John, x. 18. Acts, ii. 23. and iv. 27, 28. And accordingly, as he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and fulfilled all righteousness for us, it was a matter of right that his righteousness should be transferred to us, as our sins were to him, and fully atoned by his blood. It was with this very view and design that he suffered in the flesh. 2 Cor. v. 21. 'God,' says the Apostle, 'hath made him 'to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that 'we might be made the righteousness of 'God in him.' It was what justice owed to his suffering and obedience; a recompense that could not be denied him without charging God himself with injustice,

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as the Apostle strongly insinuates, Rom. iii, 25, 26. 'God,' says he, 'hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;' to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' So that there is a clear opposition between the grounds upon which the blood of Christ and of Abel pled; and it is easy to see on which side the advantage lies.—The blood of Abel cries murder;—the blood of Christ pleads merit.—The former pleads guilty;—the latter, not guilty. That urges the condemnation; this the absolution of the sinner. The one cries, that iniquity may never be forgotten; the other, that it may never more be remembered. The first, that judgment may be executed without mercy; the last, that mercy may rejoice over judgment. The one for the death; the other for the life of the criminal. The one for a curse; the other for a blessing. The one, that sin may be charged against the murderer; the other,

other, that righteousness may be imputed to the sinner. The blood of Abel pleads that there may be no alleviation of guilt; the blood of Christ, that there may be an utter extinction of it. Far sweeter and better things than the blood of Abel! Had the blood of Christ only hinted an extenuation of the sin, or a suspension of the punishment, it would have spoken a better thing than the blood of Abel, which would not admit of softening clauses, nor so much as an insinuation of mercy; but much better still when it pleads an absolute indemnity, the utter abolition, not of one, nor a few, nor of many sins; not of lesser or greater, but of all sins. And this, indeed, is a truth, a most sweet and comfortable truth; 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;' 1 John, i. 7. It procures a full and free pardon of all the sins of believers. Rom. viii. 1. 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' The sanction of the divine law cannot affect them; and upon this ground, that the Lord Jesus Christ has suffered in his own person whatever justice could exact of them: 'Being

‘ Being made a curse for them, that he
‘ might redeem them who were under the
‘ curse;’ Gal. iii. 13. And justice cannot
act against itself; cannot inflict that pu-
nishment on them, which Christ suffered
for them : no more than it will admit that
the principal should pay the debt a second
time, which the surety has fully cleared.

So that if we may be allowed to sup-
pose, that Cain was one of those sinners
for whom Christ died, the demands of the
blood of Abel are fully answered by the
sufferings of Christ, and if we set the
blood of Christ and the blood of Abel
in competition, as both appealing to justice,
Abel must fall from his plea, when Christ
undertakes to suffer all that Cain deserved,
and justice must decide the victory to him
that loved us. When he has suffered all
that justice could require, and pleads for
mercy, he has got justice on his side to sup-
port his plea for pardon. And now the
spirit of God himself has asserted this for a
truth, ‘ That God is faithful and just to
‘ forgive our sins;’ 1 John, i. 9. Where-
as, without the death of Christ, he would
have been faithful and just in punishing

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our sins. But if Cain was none of those who are interested in the blood of Christ, the virtue of this precious blood can lose nothing, by leaving him and others to perish for whom it does not plead. For the argument runs entirely upon the supposition of its pleading. When it speaks, it speaks better things than the blood of Abel.

Nor does the blood of Christ only plead for a full and free pardon (a much better thing than a reprieve from the punishment, or a suspension of the sentence, or encouraging hints of mercy), but also pleads for acceptance of our persons and services with God : still a much better thing. For a pardon only indemnifies, but does not imply restoration to favour. The king's pardon nullifies the rebel's obligation to punishment, but gives him no title to friendship, credit, and honour with the king. Absalom had his father's pardon for the murder of his brother, but was not admitted to court for three years, and therefore counted his life and his pardon little worth unless he had the king's countenance. But the blood of Christ not only speaks for pardon, but for honour

honour and esteem : that we may be restored to the favour and friendship of the great King of Heaven, and admitted to dwell in his presence for ever : that we may be dignified with the title and privileges, not of servants, nor even of friends only, but of his children ; 1 John, iii. 2. Rom. viii. 17. It pleads for sanctification of heart and life, that we may be meet for the glorious inheritance it has purchased for us ; 1 Cor. vi. 11. It pleads for peace and rest to the soul, and heals the wounded spirit that none can bear. The sense of blood-guiltiness, no wonder, tormented David exceedingly, as we learn from his confession, Psal. li. And on another occasion he complains, ‘ That
‘ there was no soundness in his flesh because of God’s anger ; nor any rest in
‘ his bones because of his sin ;’ Psal. xxxviii. 3. The mind of Cain was torn and tortured with strange horrors, and conscious guilt stirred sorrows up from the bottom of his soul. The blood of Abel pled terror and trouble to the guilty ; but the blood of Christ pleads peace, a sweet soul-satisfying
peace,

peace, 'That the world can neither give nor
'take away;' John, xiv. 22. 'A peace
'that passeth all understanding;' Philip.
iv. 7. Other things indeed than the blood
of Abel! Things of a better kind, of a
sweeter sound, and a milder sense.

SERMON

S E R M O N IV.

THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING.

 HEBREWS, xii. 24.

*(Ye are come) To the blood of sprinkling,
that speaketh better things than that of
Abel.*

PART SECOND.

II. **T**HE blood of Christ not only speaks better things than the blood of Abel, but in a better manner.

This will appear if we compare the force, the extent, and success of their pleadings.

I. Compare the force of their pleadings, and we shall find that the blood of Christ speaks louder than the blood of Abel, which yet spoke with exceeding great vehemence, as well appears from the nature and circumstances

stances of the crime already mentioned. But the better to understand the powerful language of the blood of Christ, let us particularly consider the vehemence of Abel expressed in the words of God to the murderer, Gen. iv. 10. '*What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*'

(*What hast thou done?*) This language of the Almighty runs in the style of wonder and astonishment, as if he, who knew all things from eternity, had discovered a new and strange kind of wickedness in the earth, which he never expected to hear; the more strongly to express, after the manner of men, how hateful and abominable the impious act was in his sight, and how loudly it called for vengeance.

We may observe here, (1.) A voice attributed to the blood, to express both the great folly and great wickedness of Cain. He imagined the wickedness would hide itself; that Abel, being once dead, would never speak, and, as there was no man beside, thought there was no witness. But the eye of God saw his cruel hands reeking with

with the blood of his brother, and heard the dying groans of Abel, while he lay agonizing in his wounds and weltering in his blood ; and, the more sharply to reprove him, the Almighty speaks to him according to his folly, according to the style of his thoughts, as if he knew nothing of the matter till he received information, and thereby lets him know that the sin was so extremely heinous, that, even upon his atheistical supposition, that God doth not see or take knowledge of things below, the very blood of the dead would sooner assume the voice of the living, and assault heaven with the sound of murder, than such God-provoking iniquity could be concealed. (2.) It is a strong voice. (It crieth.) It does not, like a bird in the air, carry the matter unwittingly away ; it does not tell the murder by dumb signs, by secret whispers, by gentle language, or merely by a clear and audible voice ; but a voice raised to roaring, from organs braced to the highest pitch, such as nature forces out when suddenly stung with extraordinary pain and terror ; such as the hideous sound, the fearful

ful shrieks, the bitter screams, the horrid yells of murder. A voice that would pierce the thickest ears, and force speedy help from the slackest hand or the hardest heart. A voice that, in an instant, presents a scene of the most shocking injustice and violence, and works up compassion itself to revenge. Such was the voice of the blood of Abel; a voice strong and vehement, beyond the ordinary pitch of nature. (3.) Observe to whom it cries,—unto God. To the righteous Judge of the whole earth, to whom vengeance belongs. (*It crieth unto me.*) A strong figure of speech, by which the blessed God, in condescendence to our weakness, represents the powerful pleadings of innocent blood in such a light as if it disturbed his happiness in heaven, as if he could have no rest for the loud and importunate clamours of the blood of Abel, till he should avenge it. (4.) Observe the vast extent of that cry. From the ground, unto God,—from earth to heaven. A cry louder far than the roaring of the sea, the sound of many waters, or the mighty peals of thunder. Should the joints of the earth

earth part, and all the rocks and mountains at once dash one another to pieces ; or if one world should hurl to ruins on another, such a noise must be great beyond imagination, yet cannot be supposed to reach the immeasurable distance between earth and heaven, so far as the cry of Abel's blood is said, in figure, to extend : to teach us the better to conceive how powerfully it pleaded with God for vengeance on the murderer.—Few expressions, but of mighty signification !

Now we have heard how loudly the blood of Abel cried ; but the voice of the blood of Christ is still above it. And this will appear, if we consider, (1.) That the blood of Christ has actually obtained the pardon of greater sins than that of shedding the blood of Abel. Murder, and particularly the murder of Abel, is a heinous and heaven-daring sin ; but that voice which is able to procure mercy, when murder cries for justice, must be the stronger and better heard of the two. Now, though not a single murder should be found on earth equal to that of Abel, yet many murders toge-

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ther may exceed it ; and the blood of Christ has obtained forgiveness of many such since Abel was slain, besides of numberless other abominations of the blackest kind. An illustrious instance of which the Apostle has recorded, 1. Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. Examples might be multiplied, but one for all is sufficient. The blood of Christ has actually obtained the pardon of many that were accessory to the most flagitious murder that it was possible for men to commit. Great was the sin of shedding the blood of Abel, yet this was but the blood of a man ; but how much more highly accented must the murder of the Son of God be ? Yet this precious blood obtained the forgiveness of many that had a hand in shedding it ! And such was his love, that he offered the benefit of his death to the most cruel of his enemies ! While they were embrewing their hands in his blood, he was praying for their pardon ? The blood of Christ did not, like Abel's, cry for vengeance upon his persecutors, but pleaded for peace, and offered it to the worst of them upon their faith and repentance. And many, whom
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his Apostles expressly charged with being the murderers of the Lord of Glory, were converted and saved by the pleadings of that very blood they had shed.

(2.) Consider the general and extensive declarations in scripture concerning the virtue of this blood. Upon this foundation sinners of all sizes are offered terms of mercy. 'Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely.' Rev. xxii. 17. However great, however many his sins have been, he that will embrace the gospel terms of mercy is welcome. And that such an extensive offer of pardon is made is owing to the death of Christ. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1. John. ii. 2. That is, not only for the sins of Jewish believers, but of believers in all nations and ages of the world. 'And, 2 Cor. v. 19. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.' And it is Christ that washeth us from our sins in his own blood, Rev. i. 5. Nor is there any sin of such inveterate quality but this precious blood is capable to take away

away if it be applied. The highest acts, the oldest habits, the greatest number of sins, it can thoroughly purge away. 1. Jo. i. 17. 'It cleanseth from all sin.' So that there is no sin, however great, if the blood of Christ cry for mercy, but it will be sooner heard, let the clamours for vengeance be never so loud. The voice of this precious blood pierces into the heavens with a stronger accent, and more moving language. It is of sufficient force to drown the loudest roarings of guilt; that the poor sinner, for whom it pleads, shall never hear it mentioned against him in judgment, no more than if he had never been guilty, or heaven had never heard it. If sin should cry up to heaven, condemnation, and the blood of Christ, no condemnation, the righteous judge of the world has already given answer, 'no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' Rom. i. 8. 'It is God that justifieth, and who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.' Rom. viii. 33. 34. So if the blood of Christ and Abel were to plead together, the one for pardon, the other for punishment,

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the first would easily prevail. And to me it appears credible, from the short hints of this history in scripture, that even this atrocious murder of Abel was pardoned, which it could not be but for Christ's sake. And as this interpretation adds not a little force to the argument in hand, it is worth while to examine whether it be true, especially as it is very different from what has been long and commonly received. To this purpose let us observe particularly Cain's confession and God's answer.

1. Cain's confession runs in the style of the deepest contrition and sorrow for his sins. Genes. iv. 13, 14. 'My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth: and from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and vagabond in earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.'

The 13th verse may be otherwise rendered, as we read it in the margin of our Bibles. 'Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven.' And that this is the truer

truer interpretation of the two appears from the connection with the sentence God had pronounced against him, v. ii.-12. All that God denounced against him was tolerable, being infinitely less than he deserved. The Lord said to him, v. 11. 'Thou art cursed from the earth.' And v. 12. That curse is explained as consisting of two parts: 1. That the earth should blast the labour of his hands by refusing her fruits. 2. That he should be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. A grievous punishment indeed, but far from what his iniquity deserved, which was enough not to curse him from the earth only, but to curse him out of heaven, and to curse him down to hell. The sentence was mild, and his punishment light in proportion to his sin, and might well be born if his iniquity was pardoned. And if it should seem strange that God should inflict punishment, and yet pardon the sin, this is not the only instance of that sort that can be adduced. Thus, we read in the history of Israelites, Num. xiv. When they had provoked God most bitterly to anger by their rebellious murmurs, that

that the Lord expressly said to Moses, upon his intercession for them, 'I have pardoned according to thy word.' v. 20. At the same time that he gives absolute assurance that he would punish their rebellion with a grievous temporal judgment, a most remarkable stroke, even the utter extirpation of that whole race to a man, Caleb and Joshua excepted. v. 21,-23. And that they might not apprehend that, because he had graciously pardoned their sin, he might likewise be induced, at Moses's request, to remit the punishment, he afterwards repeats to Moses and Aaron, and explains, at full length, his peremptory purpose to cut off that generation, from v. 26,-39. Psalm xcix. 8. In like manner, when David had greatly offended, both in the matter of Uriah, and numbering the people, when he implored forgiveness for the first offence, the Lord expressly assured him, by the mouth of Nathan, that he had obtained his request; 2. Sam. xii. 13. and when he did likewise for the second, the Lord assured his pardon, by accepting his sacrifice, as we read in the 24th chapter of the
same

same book ; and yet, as the Lord threatened, a sword never departed from his house for the one, nor did the plague cease for three days to ravage his dominions for the other. These instances evince, to a demonstration, that there is no inconsistency between pardoning the sin, and inflicting a temporal punishment on the sinner. If this double curse then, from the earth, be all that is threatened against Cain, and no more appears, he had no reason to complain of that punishment who deserved infinitely more, but great reason to complain of his sin in the bitterness of his spirit, now that God had awakened him, and to cry out as a true penitent would do, like one at the very brink of despair, mine iniquity is great, greater than that it may be forgiven. And v. 14. is a confirmation of this ; where we may observe he takes no notice of the first part of the curse, as thinking it very tolerable, but complains bitterly of the second, and in varied language, to shew how sensibly it struck him to the heart, and what a heavy meaning it had to him who felt it. God had said,

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‘ A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be
‘ in the earth,’ and Cain resumes it in these
terms, ‘ Behold thou hast driven me out
‘ this day from the face of the earth, and
‘ from thy face shall I be hid ; and a fu-
‘ gitive and a vagabond shall I be in
‘ the earth :’ which shews the stress of
the sentence to be in this, that Cain was
to be driven from that place of the earth
where God was wont to give sensible to-
kens of his gracious presence in acts of
worship. It is this he calls the face of the
earth, the most lightsome and comfortable
part of the globe, as the face is of a man.
The face of the earth, in common accep-
tation, means the surface of it, and to drive
from the face of the earth, in this sense,
must signify taking life away, for man can-
not live but on the surface of this world.
But, in this sense, it cannot be applied to
Cain, whom this sentence did not drive
out of the world, but only obliged him to
leave his wonted habitation. It was a sen-
tence not of death but banishment. And
so we are told, v. 16. he submitted to the
sentence. He went out from the presence

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of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. It is evident, from verses 3 and 4, that there was at that time a stated place for divine service, whither Cain and Abel, and no doubt Adam and Eve, and others of their posterity not mentioned, did resort to offer sacrifices to God, and where God did testify his acceptance by sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices, or some other sensible token. This is the place that Cain, in his interpretation of the sentence, calls *the face of the earth*, where God shewed his face, or clear tokens of his favour; so that driving from this place of the earth was driving from the face of God. And, agreeable to this, it is called, in the execution of the sentence, *the presence of the Lord*, the place from which Cain went, in opposition to the place to which he did go. By which we learn, that the meaning of God, in denouncing Cain a fugitive and vagabond, was not that he was to be driven from place to place continually, and obliged to wander through the world, like a vagrant, without house or harbour of his own; on the contrary, we
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are informed that he was the first that ever built a city, and that he dwelt in it, and did not wander : But that he was to be banished for ever from that place where God had appointed sacrifices to be offered in hopes of acceptance, the place where Cain first conceived wrath and malice against his righteous brother. And now he did read his sin in his punishment. Though an approach to that place could have atoned for his sin and obtained his pardon, he was debarred all hopes of access, which, in the view of his troubled mind, was excluding him from the hopes of pardon, casting him out of God's protection, and denying him all tokens of his favour. It was this that wounded him to the very soul. The loss of his labour on the earth he could bear, but the loss of God's favour he could not. The thoughts of this threw him into convulsions of sorrow. (From thy face shall I be hid.)

This language, I apprehend, shews a temper very different from that with which he began, when the Lord first questioned him concerning his brother. (Am I my brother's keeper?) It is the foul breath of an impenitent

impenitent heart hardened to an uncommon pitch of wickedness; of a heart that refuses to be ashamed, as if he would outface God himself with an impudent front. But God, by the voice of his power, strikes home to his conscience, and immediately the stout hearted sinner is broken and brought down. Now he sees himself and his sin in another light. He spoke lightly and impudently of the matter before, but now he apprehends his iniquity so great that he could hardly think the very God of mercy could pardon it. All his concern now is to be restored to the divine favour. The loss of that is the burden of his complaint. Impenitent hearts have no concern about the favour of God. While he is stretching out the arms of his mercy, and calling upon them daily to seek his face, they never regard it. But the answer of humble souls is, Psal. xxvii. 8. 'Thy face will I seek;' and verse 9. 'Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away in anger.' The sight of God's countenance is the desire and delight of heart-broken sinners, and the hiding of his face their greatest torment.

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And what language can more strongly express such a state of mind than the words of Cain? (From thy face shall I be hid.) What could David say more in the anguish of his heart because of his sin? 'I acknowledge my transgressions,' said he, 'my sin is ever before me;' Psal. li. 3. 'Mine iniquity is great, said penitent Cain, greater than that it may be forgiven. David could not bear the thoughts of forfeiting the divine favour; above all things he longed for the light of God's countenance, and therefore prays with the utmost fervour of spirit, verses 11th and 12th, 'Cast me not away from thy presence; restore me the joy of thy salvation.' And what struck Cain most sensibly we see, was, that he should be hid from the face of God. What can be liker a sinner truly humbled in the sight of God?

Besides, another thing is remarkable in Cain's confession. Formerly he feared neither the wrath of God nor man; now he is affected with both; and apprehends that he had given every man that met him a right to shed his blood, who had first taught the

the world the way to murder, by shedding the blood of his righteous brother. 'And 'it shall come to pass,' says he, 'that every one that findeth me shall slay me.' These words, I think, run in the strain of an expostulation for mercy; as if he had said, 'Lord pity me; for, if thou cast me off, who will shew me favour? Among men I can have no refuge. All mankind will justly count me their common enemy; and instead of pity or compassion, help or sympathy, from them, I have nothing to look for but their wrath and revenge, to the utmost length it can go. They will take pleasure in my misery; and from every one of my fellow-creatures I expect the worst he can do, as opportunity serves him, against me. No heart will pity, no hand will spare me. No man will regard the blood of a murderer: and, if thy mercy prevent not, I shall have no security for the life thou hast been pleased to spare. Lord have mercy on a poor helpless and forlorn wretch that no creature will compassionate.' But,

2. The Lord's answer to this appears to me a strong confirmation of all, viz. 'Therefore, whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken of him seven fold.' The voice of mercy! Words plainly intended to administer consolation to Cain, under his present trouble and distraction of heart, from the piercing sense of his sin! An express security for his life against the violence of men! Here we see the faithful God, the Father of mercies, pledging his word for Cain's safety. Death he deserved by the laws of God and man, and he was sensible he deserved it; and yet God himself not only spared his life, but assured him that no man should touch it. And would God act otherwise than justice requires, but from considerations of mercy? Or, would he grant a promise of protection to an impenitent sinner? Could any thing but mercy spare, defend, maintain the life of the first and most notorious murderer, and grant him the consolation of a promise too for that purpose? But, if it should be said God often gives life for a curse, and impenitent sinners time to fill up the measure of
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of their iniquities ; yet where did we ever read or think how it can stand with the divine perfections, that God should give a promise of protection and defence for a curse ? Promises are proper for repenting sinners only : and, if we examine narrowly the connection between Cain's confession and God's answer, I can see no other rational account can be given of it but by Cain's repentance. The illative particle *therefore*, which accommodates the one to the other, sufficiently hints this. ' *Therefore*, whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him.' Wherefore ? Not surely because he had murdered his brother would God take part with him : nor merely because Cain suffered great pain and terror from conscience of guilt ; for that and much more was the just desert of his sin : and if God had not entertained thoughts of peace to him, he would have left him to the lashes of guilt and remorse ; would not have spoken words to lessen his fears, or lighten his punishment. If mere agony, under deserved punishment, were a reason for granting favour,

favour, there would be the highest reason for shewing mercy in the doleful regions of endless sorrow and despair. Wherefore then does God speak in such gracious terms to such a notorious sinner? Wherefore, but because he saw him humbled under his mighty hand? Therefore does the Lord promise that he would resent the murder of penitent Cain seven times more severely than of righteous Abel. To shew his wondrous grace to heart-broken sinners, for their encouragement to return, he discovers a keenness to pardon and receive them; a zeal to espouse their cause and avenge their quarrel: and, as our Lord instructs by parable, Luke, xv. 7. 'rejoices over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.' Therefore the Lord promises to stand by the penitent trembling soul, to rid him of his fears, and make his bones that he had broken to rejoice.

It is added, 'The Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.' Or, as the original bears, the Lord gave Cain a token, viz. for his further assurance,

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surance, that they who met him should not kill him, as he hath often superadded a visible sign or token in confirmation of his word to others. Thus, when he sent a prophet to Jeroboam to foretel the utter demolition of his idolatrous altar by Josiah, long before he was born, he gave for a token the immediate renting of the altar, 1. Kings, xiii. 3. When he promised deliverance to Ahaz from the combined armies of Syria and Israel, he commanded him to ask a sign or visible token, Isa. vii. 11. In like manner, when he promised to protect Hezekiah from the insolent threats of Sennacherib, and at the same time from the power of death, for a confirming sign he turned the shadow ten degrees backward, Isa. xxxviii. 6,—9. So, to confirm his promise of protection to Cain, he gave him a token. What that token was, is not mentioned: it was enough to the purpose for which God gave it, if Cain himself was thereby assured that God would defend his life against the hands of men; for the sense and tenor of the words plainly shew that it was something designed to confirm

confirm Cain in the faith of that promise, that the Lord would secure his life from violence; and, lest any man should attempt his life, or to assure him that none durst, the Lord gave him a mark or sensible token.

Upon the whole, the true and genuine sense of this passage appears to be this, that God did graciously pardon the murderer of Abel upon his repentance; an interpretation that every one must see not only to be consistent with the doctrine of free grace, upon which our hope of salvation is founded, but a strong confirmation of it; an interpretation that appears to me, without stretch or torture, natural and easy: but I leave it to the judgment of my audience to search the Scriptures and see whether these things be so.

However, in order to judge of this interpretation with all the candour and impartiality that truth requires, permit me, before I dismiss it, to offer to your reflection some observations that help to support it, and to notice the principal objections that may be started against it.

(1.)

(1.) To this purpose it will not be useless perhaps to notice, that the manner of expressing the execution of the sentence is quite proper to denote a penitent submission on the part of the pannel, not the power of compulsion in the judge. Verse 16, 'Cain went out from the presence of the Lord:' was not driven by any immediate act of divine power, nor by the hands of executioners, but voluntarily submitted; accepted his sentence of banishment; 'went out from the presence of the Lord;' that is, not merely from the spot where God spake with him, but from that place of the earth, which is called the face of it, where God in a special manner shewed his face, or manifested his presence to men, as he did at Shiloh, where he set up his tabernacle, and therefore called 'the place of the Lord,' Jer. vii. 12; and at Jerusalem called 'the place where his honour dwells,' Ps. xxvi. 8. So the presence of the Lord here means that place of the earth where God more especially signified his presence. That was the place from which Cain was banished, and the land of Nod the place to which he went;

went; where it is said he dwelt, that is, took up his habitation for life; an expression proper enough to signify a settled purpose to abide by his sentence, never to return to the place from whence God had banished him; and his building a city seems to point the same way. And what more becoming a penitent than a voluntary submission to the sentence of his Judge, and a resolution not to counteract it? Nor do I think it chargeable with trifling to lay some stress upon a single word, in a history designed to be short, and upon that account requiring an exact and delicate choice of words; a history most remarkable for its conciseness and delicacy of style, in which a single word or two often expresses a most extensive and important fact, and all redundancy of language is industriously and judiciously avoided: so that the proper signification of these words, joined with the genius of the composition, are sufficient, in my apprehension, to assure us that Cain behaved like a true penitent in accepting his banishment. *He went out.* The manner of expression is very different from that made

made use of in a parallel case, when his father was banished from Paradise, the place of God's presence, in a special manner; where he was wont to converse with God as a man does with his most intimate friend; Gen. iii. 24. It is said, 'God drove out the man;' and, to prevent all attempts to return, placed a garrison of cherubims, and a flaming sword that turned every way, on the east of Eden; which plainly intimates either a higher degree of just severity on God's part against Adam than against Cain, or a greater reluctance on Adam's part than Cain's; and which ever of the two we suppose, it casts a favourable aspect on the doctrine of Cain's repentance.

(2.) Another collateral help to support the interpretation is, that, though the conference between God and Cain had not been mentioned, yet a more general account, that God did appear to him and talk with him, would have intimated thoughts of peace and not of evil towards him; that God designed to bring him to a sense of his sin, in order to bring him to repentance and
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the hopes of pardon: much more when we have a dialogue particularly recorded, wherein we hear the blessed God reasoning, expostulating, threatening, promising, not destroying the sinner, as he deserved; for, as the Prophet Amos says, chap. iii. 3, 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' Can irreconcilable enemies do any thing that has but an appearance of friendship? If God had not designed to shew mercy to Cain, I can see no reason to think that he would have conversed with him so familiarly, but reason enough to think that he would either have destroyed him outright, or left him to run on to his ruin without a challenge. And,

(3.) Another thing I cannot fail to observe is, that this appearance of God to Cain after his murder of Abel, is so like to that appearance to his father after his fall, that it supposes the like intention of mercy to the one as to the other. The Lord appeared to Adam, challenged him for his sin, brought him to a sense of it, cursed the ground for his sake, banished him

him from Paradise, but comforted him with the precious promise upon his repentance.

Here there appears such an exact correspondence between the Divine conduct in the one and the other case, that the progress and operation of mercy in the first instance seems exactly copied out in the second ; as if God had designed the exercise of his grace to Adam, as a pattern of compassion to Cain, and resolved to take the same course with the first murderer that he had done with the first sinner ; that as mercy rejoiced over judgment in the one, it might have a second victory in the other ; that his mercy might be seen to be over all his other works. And as we cannot suppose that God would have any more conversed with Adam after his fall, as a man does with his friend, without designing mercy, but reserved him for chains of darkness with the angels that fell, and made him to fall ; so neither can I think that his conversing with Cain, in like manner as he did with Adam, has a less gracious meaning.—To all this it may be objected,

(1.)

It is enough to observe, that this objection carries an answer in its arms. For if Cain's repentance was accepted, as I think appears sufficiently from what has been said, his repentance supposes his faith; and so it could not be necessary to express what is necessarily implied. Nor is there any mention of Abel's faith, nor of Enoch's, for that is supposed in God's approving of both. And so the writer of this epistle to the Hebrews reasons concerning them, Chap. xi. 4, 5. Besides that the conversation both of his father and brother would certainly instruct him in the sense of that promise of a Saviour made to his parents. And it was undoubtedly Christ himself, this promised Saviour, the second person of the thrice blessed Trinity, that appeared to Cain, and consequently, his repentance in the presence of him who had promised to

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come into the world to save sinners, supposed Cain's faith in that promise.

(2.) It may be objected that Cain is said in Scripture to be of the Devil; 1 John, iii. 12. To this it seems a sufficient reply, that both David and Peter, of whose repentance and pardon we can have no doubt, may be as truly said to be of the Devil, with respect to those great sins they committed, as Cain with regard to the murder of his brother. For it is in this respect only that he is there said to be of the Devil, having committed the horrid fact at the instigation of that wicked spirit, as we are expressly assured concerning these two great and good men I have mentioned.

(3.) It may be objected, that in the epistle of Jude, most of which is taken up in describing the characters of a most vile and flagitious set of men, he says, verse 11th, 'Wo unto them; for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for rewards, and perished in the gainfaying of Core.' Where it is obvious, that Cain is recorded as a remarkable pattern of wickedness, long after he is dead;

dead ; put on the leet with Balaam and Korah, who, there is reason to believe, died impenitent, and is never mentioned in Scripture but for the sake of his wickedness.

Though this seems the objection of greatest weight against the doctrine of Cain's repentance and pardon, yet, in my apprehension, it is far from being unanswerable. For the pardon of any crime does not, cannot make it less sinful ; neither can the character of the criminal alter the nature of the sin ; neither can the blessed God speak or judge more favourably of an act of wickedness, though it be in the person of a saint. Murder is no less murder, nor less hateful to God, nor adultery less vile in David, than it would have been in Balaam or Judas. And if we should suppose that the righteous Abel had shed the blood of Cain, it would have been no less remarkable wickedness on that account. Whoever goes on in the way of malice and murder, of which Cain was the first and most remarkable example among men, is in a woful way. Cain's sin could not be the less though it were pardoned, nor they less guilty

guilty who imitate it. The greatness of a sin magnifies the mercy of a pardon, but the pardon does not lessen the sin: and though we but suppose the sin of Cain pardoned, this does not render it less just or fit to record it as a most remarkable instance of wickedness, especially as it was the first of a kind: nor is this any more inconsistent with the mercy of God in forgiving it than inflicting a temporal punishment upon the penitent, the consistency of which has been already made evident. Manasseh is an instance both of the one and the other; for whose sake God threatened grievous judgments upon Judah and Jerusalem, and actually inflicted them, and yet pardoned his sin; yea threatened and punished his kingdom for his sake years after he was gone to his grave; Jerem. xv. 4.—And he is even recorded as a pattern of wickedness; 2 Kings, xxi. 20, 21. where it is said of Amon his son, ‘That he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did. And he walked in all the way that his father walked in.’ In Scripture account, the way of Manasseh is no better than

than the way of Cain, yet the first did actually repent and obtain pardon; consequently it is not inconsistent to suppose the same of the latter: and as it cannot conclude against the truth of Manasseh's repentance and pardon, that he stands upon record as an example of great impiety, so neither can it against that of Cain.

Neither will it argue against Cain's repentance that he is enrolled on the same list with two impenitent sinners, no more than it will argue Judas an honest disciple of Christ, because he was enlisted with his Apostles.—Allowing Balaam and Korah to die impenitent, yet it is not for their impenitence that they are here recorded, but for their sin. This is evident from the general strain of the Apostle's letter, designed to guard the Christians against the vicious principles and practices of the Gnosticks, whose characters he draws at large, and the words in dispute are plainly designed not to show that Cain, Balaam, and Korah, were impenitent, but that the Gnosticks did imitate them in their vices and sins; that they were a set of men in whom malice
and

and cruelty, covetousness and hypocrisy, rebellion and obstinacy, did all concenter in the highest degree; and it well conformed with such a design to name the most remarkable examples in every kind; and three fitter for this purpose neither sacred nor profane history can furnish. A blacker sample of cruel malice than Cain, of fordid hypocrisy than Balaam, of obstinate rebellion than Korah, is not to be found. And it is fit that Cain should stand in the front, not only because he was first in the order of time, but because he exceeded both Balaam and Korah in this, that he was the first transgressor in that kind of wickedness with which he is charged. Balaam was not the first mercenary hypocrite, nor Korah the first inflexible rebel in the world; but Cain was the first man whose heart harboured malice, whose hands committed murder. So that no more can be concluded from this passage concerning Cain, but that he is noted for a most heinous sin of which he was guilty; and we see that God, in his word, does not conceal the faults and follies of the most eminent saints,

faints, nor throw a veil over the spots of his own children. Read the catalogue of Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, and there you will find not only the marks of human frailty, but these most illustrious characters branded with most dishonourable crimes, not only before but even after their conversion : to teach the penitent not to despair, and the impenitent not to presume to imitate their sin, lest they never meet with their repentance.

Nor is there any more weight in that part of the objection that Cain is never mentioned in Scripture but for the sake of his wickedness. For these are the only two passages in which he is mentioned; and as examples in general are fit and striking illustrations of argument in order to excite hatred of vice, or love of virtue, and the first and most notable examples of the one or the other are most fit and proper, so it is evident that the design of these sacred writers, by introducing Cain, is to teach us to shun and abhor all hatred, malice, envy, by tabling the first and most remarkable example of that kind before us, and to cherish

cherish the amiable virtue of brotherly love. This is only noting him for what in fact he was notable; and the Scriptures give us no room to believe that every sinner dies impenitent that has been noted for some horrid acts of wickedness. On the contrary, they furnish abundant instances of grievous sinners repenting and obtaining pardon.

Besides, this case is not without a precedent in Scripture. For his father Adam is never mentioned in the sacred volumes after his death but to bring his iniquity to remembrance, and yet there is no room to doubt of his repentance and pardon. And he is oftener noted upon this account than Cain; Job, xxxi. 33. 'If I covered my ' transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine ' iniquity in my bosom.' Hosea, vi. 7. 'They have transgressed the covenant like ' men,' (like Adam in the original, as noted on the margin of our bibles.) Rom. v. 14. 'Death reigned over them that had not ' sinned after the similitude of Adam's ' transgression.'—'In Adam all died;' 1 Cor. xv. 22. &c.—And what, I think, bears to

to this point of reasoning is an observation which the chapter immediately preceding my text does furnish: where we see it is the professed purpose of the sacred writer to illustrate the nature of faith by the effects of it in the minds of good men, through a long induction of particular instances, in which he rises as high as the very first age of the world, and though he seems to be looking out for the most ancient example of faith he can find, yet makes no mention of the faith of Adam, but begins with Abel. Not that Adam was no believer, or that Abel was a believer before him, but because Abel was the first believer that was not remarkable for any notorious sin, as both Adam and Eve were.

But a short and sufficient answer to this objection in all the parts of it is, that both these passages carry an appeal to the original history, and bear no more than that will bear. But as that has been examined at great length, nothing appears to authorise us to believe that Cain died impenitent, but, on the contrary, much to believe that he actually repented, and was pardoned.

(4.) The novelty of this opinion perhaps some cannot digest, and may think it an objection of great weight, that the contrary has been generally and almost universally received both in the Jewish and Christian churches.

To unprejudiced minds, I need only say, in answer to this, that neither antiquity nor multitude can verify a mistake, nor give the sanction of truth to an error : neither is it a reason to reject the truth because it is of late discovery ; otherwise there could be no reason for a reformation either in matters of faith or practice, when the world has once been long misled.

(5.) If it should stick with others, that sin is said to lie at Cain's door before he executed wrath against his brother, and that God rejected his offering upon that account, as well as for this shocking act of violence ; if they can hardly think that such a notorious sinner could be pardoned, they neither remember what divine mercy can do, nor what it has actually done. It is needless to multiply instances. Cain's father, and the father of us all, was the greater sinner

finner of the two, and who doubts of his pardon? In short, I see nothing that can be objected of any force to shake the evidence of Cain's repentance and pardon, and doubt not but it will stand the test of the most narrow inquiry.

Now, as there is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, and repentance and pardon can only be obtained through the merit of his death, the conclusion from all this is, that the blood of Christ pleads more powerfully with God than the blood of Abel; seeing the blood of Christ could procure mercy to the murderer, however loudly the blood of Abel called for vengeance. And as the general considerations, already adduced, evince sufficiently that the blood of Christ would certainly prevail above that of Abel, in case of a competition, so this shews that it actually happened, and converts the supposition to a fact; shews that the blood of Christ actually requested and obtained forgiveness, however loudly the blood of Abel protested against it; and that must be the loudest voice which is best heard.

Having

Having seen that the blood of Christ speaks louder than the blood of Abel, let us now compare,

2. The extent of their pleadings.—The blood of Abel needed but one sentence from the mouth of the Most High to quiet the loud clamours of it; and, when that was past, its pleading was ended. It had but one criminal to arraign, and the process was not long in dependence. The protestation and appeal was quickly tabled at the judgment seat in heaven, and the sentence was quickly passed to the pursuer's satisfaction. If the blood of Abel cried loud, it had no occasion to cry long.

But the blood of Christ pleads not for one, nor two, but for thousands; not for a day, nor a year, nor an age, but through all generations. The found of this peace-speaking blood continues from the beginning to the end of time. This blessed advocate, with the father, began to plead upon the merit of his blood long before it was shed. The eternal decree of the most high God gave him a right to plead this before he took part of flesh and blood.

For

For though he was not yet actually sacrificed for sin, he was intentionally so. The unalterable purpose of God made the shedding of his blood as sure as if it had been actually shed from the beginning; and God himself reckoned upon the decree as upon the fact. Hence Christ is called, 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' Rev. xiii. 8. That is, slain in the purpose of God, though, in fact, he was but slain in the latter ages of it. Accordingly, this important fact is noted in the scriptures of truth as the fulfilling of this purpose, Act ii. 23. and iv. 28. And so it was this precious blood of Christ that bespoke mercy for Adam and Eve so soon as they fell, for all the patriarchs and believers before he actually died; 'and now he is alive, and liveth for evermore to make intercession for us.' Heb. vii. 25. This gracious lover of souls knows no fatigue in his work, and will never, indeed, cease interceding for mercy to the penitent till the consummation of things, till his whole family in heaven and earth are finally compleated and gathered together.

The

The blood of Abel was silenced so soon as sentence was given against his murderer ; but the power and virtue of Christ's blood is not exhausted when sentence is given in favours of one and another, and another penitent, but extends to every individual penitent and believing soul of man from Adam to the last born, and continues perpetually to plead, with vigour unimpaired, till time shall be no more.

Now, as the magnitude, multiplicity, and continuance of effects must always bear a proportion to the power, fecundity, and vigour of a cause, the blood of Christ infinitely outreaches in this respect, and not only speaks better things, but, in a manner, infinitely better than the blood of Abel.

3. The superior efficacy of the former is legible in the success. When the blood of Abel cried unto God from the ground, he heard, he answered, and called the murderer to a speedy reckoning, and did avenge it, but in part only, upon the person of the murderer, not to the full extent that the innocent blood did require, and such iniquity deserved, because infinite wisdom
had

had found a way to pardon the greatest sins, to the satisfaction of justice, through the blood of Jesus. The blood of Abel so far succeeded in its advocacy, that the righteous Judge cursed Cain from the earth, and expelled him from the place of his visible presence in it: but the blood of Christ obtained the pardon of the sin; and as there was greater mercy in the pardon than severity in a temporal punishment, so the blood of Christ had greater success than the blood of Abel. I said formerly, that if the sin of Cain was not pardoned, it was only because the blood of Christ did not plead for him. But if it did bespeak mercy at the same time that the blood of Abel cried for wrath, who can doubt but the blood of the Son of God would be sooner heard than the blood of any, or of all the sons of men? With him his heavenly father was always well pleased; him he always heard. He never did, never will, and never can fail of success in his advocacy. Let all the world cry for vengeance, they can never speed in the process,

cess, when the blood of Christ applies for pardon.

Thus, through all the windings of this comparison, one point is clear, viz. That the blood of Christ speaketh better things, and in a better manner, than the blood of Abel.

From what has been said, the two following inferences arise,

1. Hence the most notorious sinners have the highest encouragement to repentance and amendment of life. However great, however many, however long continued his iniquities may be, yet, if the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, the blood of Christ will infallibly secure his pardon. Though his soul were never so black with malice, and red with murder, this precious blood can wash the Ethiopian white as the snow, and cleanse the murderer from blood-guiltiness; could even have made Sodom and Gomorrah clean, had they repented of their abominations,—can save the chief of sinners,—has actually clarified the dreg of heathens,
the

the vilest of men, drenched in all the dishonours of the human nature,—has repaired the injuries done to the divine perfections, and reconciled the salvation of sinners with the honour of the deity. This blood can quench the wrath of God, silence the roaring disquiet of the heart, and quell the terrors of death and judgment. It can create peace in the midst of trouble, and speak in season to the wounded and weary soul. And, accordingly, the blessed Jesus opens his heart, and offers his bosom to such. Matt. xi. 28. ‘Come unto me all ye that labour, &c.’ Here is the proper centre, the sure resting place of a sinful soul, a covert from the tempest, and a hiding place from the storm. And what stronger incitement to repentance than assurance of peace and pardon for Christ’s sake? without which all arguments to repentance would be in vain. Let never sinner despair of pardon who is willing to repent, while there is such a powerful advocate placed at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The blood of Jesus will procure a welcome to the most riotous

tous prodigal who is resolved to return to his heavenly father. Though his iniquities should reach up to heaven, and cry louder from the ground unto God than ever the blood of Abel did, yet the blood of Jesus will be better heard in his behalf; will speak better for him than guilt can against him; will speak peace for all, and to all that turn unto God and are sincerely resolved never again to return unto folly.

2. From what has been advanced, we may justly conclude the case of impenitent sinners most sad and terrible. They slight the only remedy that the wisdom and goodness of God himself has contrived for the recovery of lost souls; they forsake their own mercy, and reject the counsel of God against themselves; they have none to stand between them and the terrors of divine vengeance, none to speak a word in their defence. The blood of sprinkling that breaths benignity and love, that speaks peace to others, will exclaim for accumulated indignation on them; and it will be heard, and will surely prevail, whether it
speak

Speak for mercy, or call for judgment. Impenitence will convert the voice of mercy to terror, and state the blood of Jesus our antagonist. And sad must the case of that soul be that has such a powerful advocate to plead against him. If the blood of Christ be able to procure mercy when justice calls for punishment, much more will it be able to procure vengeance when it joins issue with justice. It will not only secure the just and heavy punishment of our sins, but heighten all with the plea of despised mercy, if we live and die impenitent. It will add fury to the tremendous arm of incensed Omnipotence; it will make it fit for wisdom itself to laugh at our calamity, and meet for mercy to delight in our destruction; will make it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for such as obstinately repel the gentle voice, the kindly offers, the warm solicitations of mercy. And, therefore, as the Apostle immediately infers from the text, 'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.'

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY
GHOST.

MATTHEW, iii. 11. Latter clause.

*He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and
with fire.*

IN TWO PARTS.

BEFORE John the Baptist spake these words, his ministry had been so remarkably successful, and his person so highly revered, that, as Luke speaks, iii. 15, 'the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not.' But as he had no intention to impose upon the world, or purchase a reputation at the expence of truth,

truth, he thought himself highly concerned to correct such a dangerous prejudice, directly tending to destroy the end and design of his mission. Accordingly, he publicly declared, in his sermons to the crowded audience that attended him, ' I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but ' he that cometh after me is mightier than ' I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, ' he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost ' and with fire.'—' There is an infinite ' difference between that blessed person and ' me. Indeed the end of his office and ' mine is the same, that is, to bring you to ' repentance. With this view I preach ' and baptize with water, which is but an ' emblem of the sanctifying influence of ' the Divine Spirit. I come to preach repentance unto you, but he to work it in ' you. I am but his servant, and not even ' worthy of this, but an instrument of leading you unto him, that he may give you ' what I cannot give, and you cannot want. ' This is all the use and end of my office ' and labours among you; and, if you ' come not to him, all I can say or do will ' be

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‘ be of no service to your souls ; for I
‘ have no power to communicate the
‘ Divine Spirit unto you ; but he has all
‘ the power that I want, and shall baptize
‘ you not only with water as I do, but
‘ with the Holy Ghost and with fire.’

Which words of the Baptist particularly and directly refer to that wonderful effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when it is said all the Apostles and Disciples of Christ, assembled in one place, were filled with the Holy Ghost, and cloven tongues of fire sat upon each ; Acts, ii. 3, 4. Not as if the fire, however active an element it be, has any more virtue in itself to work a saving change upon the soul than water, but to represent the inconceivable activity and energy of the Divine Spirit in his operations upon the mind. Fire is here added to the baptism with the Holy Ghost to signify the certain and perfect efficacy with which he does his work, in contradistinction to the fruitless operation of mere instruments. And this baptism with the Holy Ghost, represented by fire, John expressly declares to be in the power of Christ.

What

What I further propose from these words, through divine grace, is,

I. To shew what is the proper work of the Divine Spirit in the soul, here expressed by baptism with fire, in opposition to mere external baptism by water.

II. To explain how this baptism is derived to us.

III. To point out the practical use of this subject.

I. I am to shew what is the proper work of the Holy Ghost here expressed by baptism with fire.

Without this, all gifts natural or acquired, all privileges common or extraordinary, all advantages whatsoever, are nothing. Without this, we must remain in the same wretched state in which we were born, without receiving any advantage from the glorious privileges of a Gospel dispensation, or any alteration in our state but that of increasing our sin, and heightening our judgment at last: a work therefore this of the utmost importance for us to know and feel experimentally in ourselves.

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ourselves. It is the grand criterion by which our blessed Lord distinguishes the elect and reprobate, John, xiv. 17. Whoever, or whatever they be, that receive not the spirit of truth, and are not baptized with the Holy Ghost, call them Jews, call them Heathens, call them Christians, if you will, but such they are not; for, 'if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his;' Rom. viii. 9. Men may have a name to live, while they are but dead; they may be called, they may be thought Christians in the world, while they are utter strangers to the spirit of Christ; I mean, to his saving influence upon their souls. They may know more of his nature and miraculous operations on others than the Disciples at Ephesus did; Acts, xix. 2: they may believe that he is God equal with the Father and the Son, remember and own that they were likewise baptized in his name, while they remain ignorant and unconcerned about his vital influences upon their hearts and lives, and are actuated still by the spirit of the world. In order, therefore, to know more of him than the world can know, to receive

receive and improve his precious influences, and to judge whether we have received them, let us bend our attention to the description he hath given of himself by the mouth of John the Baptist; remembering that, though the Holy Ghost does not descend upon us in the element of fire, as he did upon the Apostles and first Christians, yet he works as effectually in converting and edifying sinners unto eternal life in all ages and to this day as he did on that occasion.

Fire, here constituted a symbol of the Divine Spirit, represents him unto us under these three characters: 1. As a spirit of truth; 2. A spirit of holiness; 3. A spirit of power.—A spirit of truth, because he discovers truth to the soul by enlightening the understanding:—a spirit of holiness, because, by his residence in us, he subdues the corruptions of our nature, whatever is vicious and vile, earthly and sensual in us, and contrary to true holiness:—a spirit of power, because he animates us with fortitude and strength to resist temptations, and stand out the severest trials of our fidelity and allegiance to our God and Redeemer.

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Correspondent

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Correspondent to the properties of fire, manifested in its operations upon matter, are the qualities of the Divine Spirit discovered in his gracious influences upon the soul. Fire, the most noble and active of all elements, has these three remarkable properties, light, purity, and heat. So the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of truth, enlightens the soul; as a spirit of holiness, he purifies it; as a spirit of power, he warms and enlivens it. As a spirit of truth, he dispels the darkness of our minds; as a spirit of holiness, he delivers us from the impurity of criminal affections; as a spirit of power, he makes us to triumph over all our enemies. As a spirit of truth, he elevates, enlarges, and perfects our understandings; as a spirit of holiness, he reforms and changes our hearts; as a spirit of power, he fortifies and strengthens us with zeal and courage to persevere in the course of duty. Three remarkable effects of his gracious presence in the soul, which require a strict attention, and which I pray we may feel, while we speak and hear.

I. Under the symbol of fire, the Spirit of God is represented as a spirit of truth enlightening the soul, by whose direction alone we can be safely conducted in the way of truth. To discover truth is indeed compatible with the powers of man, a thing not always above his reach; and, so far as his reason is capable of this, it may very properly be compared to a fire or light within him, as we see it in Scripture; Prov. xx. 27. However, it is not so properly truth as scraps or shreds of truth, that such a narrow light can serve to pick up in corners; and all the discoveries of human reason must be but a kind of patch-work, a collection of various pieces of truth imperfectly tacked together; for the discovery must be proportioned to the light; and it is but a little spot that a candle can illuminate. But as it requires a light nothing less than the sun to discover the whole face of nature, so no spirit, below the Spirit of God, can discover all truth without exception, to all persons without distinction, and by all ways possible. This is the peculiar prerogative of the Divine Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 10. ‘He searcheth all
‘ things,

' things, yea the deep things of God . And accordingly our blessed Lord, hinting at the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, mentions this as his essential character. John, xvi. 13. ' When He the spirit of truth (the spirit that can never err) ' is come, he shall guide ' you into all truth,' into all saving truth, and nothing but truth. And of this the world had the most sensible evidence on that remarkable day, as will appear more fully afterward.

out ' He shall guide you into all truth ;' that is, into all saving truth, and as much as is fit and necessary for you to know, or others to whom I send you to preach it. I say, unto all saving truth : And that we are thus to limit the meaning of this expression, ' all truth,' is evident. For our blessed Lord came not into the world, nor sent his Apostles to teach men such truths as respect their subsistence in this world, but such as concern their happiness in the next, and as much of this as is fit and necessary for us to know. For there are truths of this sort which we are not capable to comprehend

hend in this state of darkness, to the knowledge of which he will lead us at the last, when he hath enlarged and perfected our powers in a better world. And there are truths which it is impossible for any created capacity to penetrate in any state whatsoever. No creature can ever know all that is in God; there is no searching the Almighty to perfection. And if the spirit of truth lead us not into the knowledge of things incomprehensible, this argues not a limitation of his knowledge, but of our capacity. He knows all truth, and will lead us into all that is necessary for our salvation, and so at last to all we can be capable to comprehend. And this no spirit but the spirit of truth can do. The spirit of man may discover what is within him, and some things without him, but what lies in the mind of God can no creature reveal; 1 Cor. ii. 11. There are truths, shocking to nature, which human reason is slow to believe, and averse to receive; truths humbling, mortifying, and apparently severe to the mind of man, which, for that very reason, are wholesome and necessary to be known

known and received ; in a word, there are truths which man does not know how to bear, much less how to love ; and if he comes to be sincerely and effectually persuaded of them, and cheerfully to receive them, this can be no other than the work of a spirit superior to his own, even the spirit of truth who actuates him and raises him above himself. The spirit of man apprehends after the manner of man, and persuades him to embrace what is agreeable to his natural inclinations ; what flatters his vanity, what excites his curiosity, what favours his lusts. But to convince him of a truth that strikes directly against the rooted prejudices of his mind, the partiality of his affections, the virulence of humour, the violence of passion, the greed of appetite, in short, the natural bent and habitual swing of a blinded mind and a vitiated heart, and to persuade him cheerfully to receive and readily to obey such truths, can never be the work of the spirit of man, but of the spirit of God. This requires a new sight, a new cast, a new make, another mind, another heart than nature or education can give,

give, which the spirit that formed us at first can only give.

Of all which we have a most glorious and remarkable instance in the Apostles on that solemn occasion to which the words of my text refer. Then was accomplished with a witness what our Lord promised, when he said ' he would send them the spirit of truth, who should guide them into ' all truth.' Himself had laboured both by public and private instruction to overcome the slowness of some, the obstinacy of others, the prejudices of all, by gentle and easy steps, and to instil the truth into their minds by degrees as they could bear it; yet their knowledge that day that he left them, was weak, their prejudices strong, and the roots of unbelief still stuck fast in their minds. Not that he wanted power to accomplish by his personal ministry what he did after he ascended into heaven, but that in his infinite wisdom he reserved an entire conquest of all their prejudices, by a full illumination of their minds, to this extraordinary day of his spirit; which, when they had received, they were no more blind,

blind, but seeing; no more faithless, but believing; no more obstinate and perverse, but pliable and yielding. These truths which before appeared hard sayings, and incredible to them, unfolded themselves, stood full and fair before them, and appeared to be truths indeed worthy to be supported and propagated at the expence of all that could be dear and valuable to them in the world. Then they understood the truths that were hid from them, discovered their principles, and clearly saw their consequences. To deny themselves, and to bear their cross after Jesus, to forfeit their possessions, their friends, their country, their reputation, liberty, life for his sake, was no longer, in their apprehension, any kind or degree of folly, think the world as they would; but they constructed it their best policy the greatest wisdom.—To love their enemies, meekly to receive and frankly to forgive the greatest injuries, was no longer in their esteem either a weakness or meanness of spirit; on the contrary, by this they measured the grandeur and power of the Christian spirit. They no longer
count

count the riches of this world their good, but reckon it a blessing to be poor for Christ's sake, and in want of all things. They regard not persecution as an evil, nor think of deserting Christ for fear of it any more, but exult for joy when they are counted worthy to suffer for his name. For now they see things in another light. And why, but because the blessed spirit of truth filled their souls with light and love. Was it so, because his power met with proper subjects, because the Apostles were apter scholars, more tractable than other men? No, my brethren; they were even such as ourselves; had infirmities, faults, and follies as well as we: Men whom our blessed Lord reproves as fools, and slow of heart to believe; Luke, xxiv. 25. that looked upon what Christ had foretold, and the women reported for fact as idle tales; that would not believe unless they saw; men carnal, selfish, and worldly minded, who contended within hearing of their Saviour who should be greatest; Luke, xxii. 24. Men who were even a trial to the patience of Christ. Mark, ix. 19. 'O faith-

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‘less generation how long shall I be with
‘you? How long shall I suffer you?’ And
to the last he upbraided them with their un-
belief and hardness of heart, Mark, xvi.
14. Such were the subjects the divine
spirit had to work upon in the persons of
the Apostles; no better than other men,
either in respect of natural capacity or dis-
positions, and far inferior to many in re-
spect of acquired abilities. Men of low
education, unlearned, and strangers to that
largeness and liberty of thought which
learning generally communicates. Yet of
such did the spirit of truth make choice
for his disciples, and taught them to per-
fection in an instant. Of these unbeliev-
ers he framed the pillars of faith; of these
unlearned he raised the powerful teachers of
all nations; these weak men he made the
conquerors of the world; of these foolish
creatures he made the wisest and best of
men; these hard hearts he made the most
ductile and pliant to his discipline. And
what is the meaning of all this, but to
teach us what he is, and what he can do?
That the world might see the excellency
of

of the power to be of God, and not of men. That never man, after them, should despair of success under the teaching of the spirit of truth. In this he was pleased to give an astonishing essay of his power to enlighten the darkest mind, to subdue the hardest heart, and to render the most fearful willing to sacrifice their lives for the truth's sake. Is it in the power of man to teach to this effect? Had Plato required his disciples to die martyrs for his doctrines, they would have despised, turned their backs upon him. But the spirit of truth, at the same time that he revealed gospel truths to his disciples, though he revealed that the faith of these truths was an obligation to martyrdom, and would expose to reproach, persecution, and death; yet he persuaded with such power that they resolved to maintain them cost what it would. He set the truth in such an amiable and ravishing view before them, that they did reckon all in the world but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and determined to spend the last drop of their blood in his service. Whence

we

we may conclude, with advantage, that the spirit of truth can persuade any soul to embrace any truth, however harsh and disagreeable to flesh and blood, and can teach him to love what nature abhors. Like the fire in the heavens, that great light that God made to rule the day, his holy spirit sheds such a full and pure light upon the soul he would convert, as takes off the frightful appearance, which the natural darkness of the mind imposes upon truth, and reconciles it to the hardest sayings that can proceed out of his mouth. For it is not the Apostles and first disciples only whom he enlightens with the saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus: But, in every true disciple of Christ, gives such force to truth, as makes him, if not an actual, yet a resolved martyr for his sake. For, without this, our Lord has assured us no man can be his disciple, Luke, xiv. 26. He does not indeed bestow the same extraordinary gifts, nor the same special grace in the same extraordinary way, and in the same extraordinary measure upon all; but, by ordinary means, and in due measure, he

he distributes to every one severally as he will, and makes the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus to shine into the hearts of all he converts, so that they who were naturally in darkness are made light in the Lord, Eph. v. 8. They see its truth in its native shape, and its lovely form; they are resolved to buy it at any price, and if it may not be at a cheaper rate, to sell their lives to secure the truth.

Thus the Holy Ghost baptizes the soul as with fire, diffusing the light of truth over the mind, and dispelling the clouds of ignorance and error. And this gracious office he offers to perform to all who are willing to follow his instruction, Prov. i. 20, 23.

Before we proceed, let us attend to two reflections which arise from what has been said.

1. We may read the natural blindness of our minds, and the vanity of our hearts in the power that is requisite to change them. Nothing below the power of the divine spirit can effect this. Nor man, nor angel

angel can imprint the saving knowledge of truth upon the soul, nor communicate light sufficient to pierce the clouds of error, the fogs of prejudice, the steams of lust that involve the mind, or though they could, yet can never impart a power to perceive it. For as in nature, it is not only necessary that the light shine, but that the organs of sight be qualified to receive it, before we can see, so, with respect to truth, it is not enough to discover it unless the mind be rightly disposed to receive it. And it lies not within the province of created power to give sight to the blind, much less to rectify a vitiated understanding. Such is the state of the human mind by nature, with respect to the knowledge of God and divine things. Like a diseased or a blinded eye, it is unqualified to receive the rays of divine truth, even though they shine upon it till it be qualified anew to perceive them; 1. Cor. ii. 14. A pitiable state! not to know, not to be capable of knowing these things that most nearly concern us, without which, the knowledge of every thing else is vain and useless! and so
much

much the more lamentable that we are disposed to boast of our knowledge, and hold these important truths foolish and ridiculous which we do not know, as if we knew them better than others. Witness the reception that the learned Jews and Greeks gave to the revelation of the gospel, 1. Cor. i. 23. What else but a blinded mind could drive the wise, the learned world so wide of truth, even when it was fully and freely declared unto them? Yet these were not the weakest sort of men, but such as the world reputed wise. These were the brightest minds that nature formed; and what better could the state of the weak and unlearned be? Hence it was not only necessary that God should send us a teacher from heaven to declare the truth unto us, but one that could qualify our minds to receive it, before we could ever feel the saving power of it. Accordingly, the revelation of the divine spirit is both external and internal, to answer the necessities of our state. The external contained in his word, which yet we cannot understand to saving purpose without the internal

ternal illumination of our minds. Therefore, says the Apostle, 1. Cor. i. 12. We have received the spirit of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. Clearly teaching, that the external revelation can never teach us to know the truth to purpose and good effect, without the inward illumination of the spirit of truth. Such is the woeful darkness of our minds by nature, that he only who commanded the light to shine out of darkness can make the truth to shine into our hearts.

2. We may see the sin and danger of trusting to means. However fit, however excellent in themselves, they have no power or sufficiency to instill the saving knowledge of truth into the mind. What can be a more proper mean of awakening, convincing, converting, sinners, than that revelation of God's will, which his own spirit hath dictated in his word, so wisely accommodated to all the different powers and postures of the mind? Yet, far from being the instrument of life to all, it proves the ministration of death and condemnation

tion to many that hear it. Though the light shines around them, they see it not; they still continue what Nature made them; and, while they remain in this state, it can only serve to preach their eyes blind, ears dull, and hearts gross, till the spirit of truth illuminate and rectify their vitiated minds. What more powerful instruments of salvation did God ever appoint than the Apostles, whom he endowed with extraordinary gifts and graces; yet they had no power, no virtue in themselves, to make those that heard them see and feel the power of truth. Though their sermons roared like the thunder, and flashed like the lightning, many that heard them were hardy enough to resist, to repel, to contradict, to blaspheme, and set their mouths against the heavens. So little did they profit by the best means. For indeed what could Paul, what could Apollos do but plant and water; i. Cor. iii. 5, 6. The spirit that wrought in them must work in us before we can profit by their labours.

II. Under the symbol of fire the Holy
U Ghost

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Ghost is represented as a spirit of holiness purifying the soul. For, as fire is the most pure and purifying element, as it were the very spirit and quintessence of matter, it is in these respects a proper emblem of that blessed Spirit, who is absolutely pure and holy in himself, who is the source and principle of all holiness in the creature, and whose office it is to cleanse and sanctify the soul. Hence he is called, by way of eminence, the Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, as in the text, and Luke, ii. 13; that Holy Spirit, Eph. i. 13; and the Spirit of Holiness, Rom. i. 7; in whom holiness resides in its perfection, so as it never can in any other spirit; from whom all true holiness is derived to all that partake of it. As all creatures derive their existence from him, so all holy creatures their holiness. It is he that made the angels holy and pure, and the same that keeps 'holy still,' those who abide in their first estate. It is he that made man at first upright and pure; and now that he is fallen by his iniquity, it is the Spirit of God alone that can sanctify him anew, who can qualify him again for the

the enjoyment of God; without whose vital operation and influence we can have no share of eternal life; 2 Theff. ii. 13; and 1 Cor. vi. 11; and Tit. iii. 5: which words allude to the way of dispensing the sacrament of baptism at that time. The converts were brought to the brink of a river or pool of water, into which they were plunged after stripping off their clothes; and, when they came out, put on not the old, but a new suit pure and clean; signifying that purity of heart, that newness of life they were sworn by this solemn profession to maintain, and which the Holy Spirit alone could work in them, and therefore called 'the washing of regeneration' and renewing of the Holy Ghost;' external baptism by the hands of the minister being designed a figure of that inward renovation wrought by the Divine Spirit, without which external baptism can do no service to the soul: and therefore the Apostle Peter, i. 3, 21, speaking of the preservation of Noah and his family by the waters of the deluge, saith, 'The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save
' us.'

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us.' Noah was saved by the waters of the flood, so are Christians by the water of baptism. But then it is to be observed, that Noah's salvation by water was but a figure of eternal salvation that God had prepared for him, and so is baptism with respect to us. Washing away the filth of the flesh by the water of baptism is but a figure of the washing away the filth of the spirit by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which the Apostle calls 'the answer of a good conscience towards God.' Outward cleansing is but an emblem of inward purity, without which baptism cannot save us. And this inward purification by the Holy Ghost is expressed in the text by baptism with fire, which does not, like water, merely cleanse the surface or outside of things, but penetrates into the very heart even of the hardest metals, dissolves their substance, and separates the gross from the fine, takes forth the precious from the vile. So does the Holy Ghost work upon the soul.

(1.) By his powerful agency he pierces the very soul and conscience of the man, and reaches the very inmost thoughts and desires

fires of the heart. The heart that no man can see, the secret thoughts and intents of the heart that reason cannot dive, that fancy cannot hit, conjecture cannot approach, he can pierce through and through in a moment, and split their most close and secret connections. The heart that is impenetrable to all considerations; that, like a rock of adamant, can resist and reverberate all the arguments of duty, interest, gratitude, without receiving the least impression; the heart that can hear without concern the most awful threatnings, the most precious promises, the most powerful exhortations, the most tender intreaties, and most melting invitations, he moves, he softens, he dissolves by a touch of his power. The conscience, benumbed and seared as with a hot iron, that knows no fear, nor forethought, nor remorse, even for the blackest crimes, he can touch to the quick, and make it capable to feel. The will, that neither force, nor art, nor argument can subdue, that headstrong, perverse, and obstinate principle, he can incline to his gracious purposes; and of resolved rebels, that will not yield, he can
make

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make 'a willing people in the day of his
' power;' Ps. cx. 3. For the experience
of this we might appeal to ten thousand in-
stances, but let it satisfy us to hint at that
great, that glorious day of the Spirit which
the Baptist meant in the text, Acts, ii.
There we see a multitude of people, who
had been regularly taught by the ministry
established in the church of God by the
hands of Moses, bred up in the faith of a
Messiah, and zealous followers of John the
Baptist, whose ministry they admired and ap-
proved, who pointed out to them the blef-
sed Person whom they did expect; a people
who saw and heard and conversed with the
Son of God himself, beheld his glorious
miracles, witnessed his holy life, and attend-
ed his heavenly sermons; and yet a people
that continued still hardened and impenitent
in their sins, art and part in the atrocious
murder of the Lord of Glory, without any
sense of their guilt, any check of conscience
for such a horrid crime, till the Holy Spirit,
with the word of Peter, pierced their souls
like the lightning of fire; and then 'they
' were pricked in their hearts, and cried
out,

‘out, Men and brethren, what shall we do
‘to be saved?’ verse 37; and that very
day ‘three thousand souls were added to
‘the church,’ verse 14. And by a like
glorious act of his power, a few days after,
he pierced the hearts of five thousand at once,
Acts, iv. 4. Thus, as fire penetrates the
heart of matter, the Holy Spirit penetrates
the soul he would convert. True, he does
not work upon all in the same way. Some
he strikes at once in a sudden and surpris-
ing way, like elementary fire; others he
warms in a gentle and gradual manner,
like the beams of the sun. Sometimes he
works immediately and directly, and other
times by means, and these various in their
nature and manner of operation. A word
in the ear, a thought in the heart, a sur-
prising providence, an accident at conver-
sation, a promise, a threatening, a reproof,
an exhortation, or the ordinary course of
instruction by word and providence, any
mean, however weak in itself, single or all
together, are sufficient, with him, to convey
his vital warmth to the soul. His power
is not limited, and the manner of his op-
eration

ration as various as he will ; but whenever, wherever, however he works, he can never fail to reach the soul and work it effectually to his will.

(2.) As the force of fire dissolves the bands of matter, liquifies and melts down the most solid and massy metals to a fluid that may be moulded into any shape the refiner will ; so the Holy Spirit, by his power, mollifies the hardened heart, makes it tender and susceptible of his gracious impressions. In converting a soul, he does not penetrate like fire, in a certain degree, enough to warm the iron but not to soften it, but with such power as serves to mould the mind to his gracious purposes. Thus his sanctifying virtue is expressed in that great and precious promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. When God puts his Spirit within us, he acts with such power that the rocky heart melts down at his presence ; he makes it quite another thing than Nature made it, endows it with new qualities and dispositions, and the man becomes quite another man. Then he sees, he feels what an evil and a bitter thing it is to depart from the
Lord.

Lord. Now he perceives the beauties of holiness and the deformities of sin, feels a strong attraction to the first and aversion to the last. Now he has new principles, 2 Cor. v. 7 : new ends, 2 Cor. iv. 18 ; 1 Cor. x. 31 : new motives, Isa. lxvi. 2 : new employments, new passions and affections, Gal. v. 22, 23 : and, though he have not all these qualities to perfection here, they are growing on to perfection hereafter, Phil. i. 6. Thus the Holy Spirit, like fire, melts and moulds the soul in the day of his power. But it may be suggested, if the Holy Spirit work with such power in all he converts, all must be very sensible of a change from one extreme to another, or, as it is expressed in the promise, from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. To this we answer ; such a strong metaphor is only made use of to express the most striking instances of his power upon the most hardened sinners, such as these already mentioned, to shew what he can do, what he will do upon the worst subjects where he intends to work, that all may see his sufficiency to work the like blessed change upon

every soul. But some he sanctifies from the womb, and trains them up by such easy and almost imperceptible degrees, that we cannot know the time or the manner of their change, though they may feel the same blessed temper of soul in themselves that he works in all the vessels of mercy. The operations of his grace are analogous to those of his providence; in which he always works out his wise designs effectually, though not always sensibly, with as much certainty and success when his hand is not seen as when his arm is made bare.

(3.) As the activity of fire evaporates the light and airy particles of matter, and purges off the scum and dross, so the Holy Spirit, by his sanctifying influences on the soul, expels the vain and frothy humours, and discharges earthly, gross, and carnal affections, Mat. iii. 2, 3. He clears off the vileness and vitiosity of passions, affections, and appetite, the base mixture of corruption that pollutes and vilifies the soul; these impure desires of the flesh and of the mind that are the reproach, the shame and dishonour of an immortal spirit, he subdues
and

and expels, and makes it capable of acting worthy of God and worthy of itself, till he bring it by degrees to its primitive perfection: and it is a work peculiar to him only; for, though indeed we are commanded to purify ourselves from all uncleanness of the flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1, yet this is neither expected nor required but in a dependence upon the purifying influence of the Divine Spirit. Without this we shall attempt, and strive, and labour in vain. 'If we mortify the deeds of the body,' as the Apostle says, Rom. viii. 13, we shall 'live.' But how is this to be done? By the light of reason, by the force of education, by the power of human industry and resolution? No; but through the Spirit. He alone can give success to our endeavours, and effectually subdue these evil inclinations that deprave the mind. This blessed agent, like the fire that came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice on the altar of old, consumes the corruptions of the heart; and his purifying virtue alone can create a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us; and, therefore, when the Psalmist

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Psalmist prays for this blessing, he prays at the same time that God would not take his Holy Spirit from him, Ps. li. 10, 11; well knowing, that he could never attain to purity of heart without the sanctifying influence of the Divine Spirit, nor ever see the salvation of God. Therefore does he pray, verse 12, 'Restore me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit.' According to what our blessed Lord has taught in more express terms, John, iii. 8, 'Except ye be born of water, and of the Spirit, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' because the holy, the sanctifying Spirit of God alone can purify our souls, and make us meet for that kingdom into which no unclean thing can enter. This second birth, this second baptism, is the work of the Holy Ghost, whose powerful operation, like fire, penetrates, pervades, and refines the soul, clearing off all carnal and earthly desires, all impure thoughts, all vain imaginations that exalt themselves against God, in short, all that pravity of mind and manners which Nature works into the constitution of the soul, and
which

which habit, education, and communication with a wicked world, diffuse, strengthen, and root fast in the heart; in place of all these, the operation of the Holy Ghost implants in the soul heavenly dispositions, pure affections, holy meditations, and forms to a likeness to his own blessed nature. He who passes through this heavenly fire becomes a new man, the reverse of what Nature made him; a new creature in Christ Jesus: 'all
' old things are done away, behold all
' things are become new,' as the Scripture speaks on this head. 'He hath put off the
' old man, which is corrupt according to
' the deceitful lusts, and put on the new
' man, which is created in righteousness
' and true holiness, after the image of him
' that created him,' Eph. iv. 22, 24.

Of this purifying virtue of the Divine Spirit there have not been wanting numberless monuments in all ages; and, bad as the world is, yet it is not without living evidences of it at this day. But, to look where the text points, we may observe a remarkable change on the minds of the Apostles and first disciples. They were
not,

not, indeed, absolute strangers to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit before the day of Pentecost. They were clean, as our Lord saith, John, xiii. 10. The Holy Spirit had discovered unto them what flesh and blood could not reveal, purifying their hearts by faith, of which Peter, in the name of the rest, made a noble profession, Mat. xvi. 16; and John, vi. 68, 69; yet there was still much of earth in their notions and affections. Witness Peter's behaviour immediately after his confession, Mat. xvi. 22, and our Lord's answer, verse 23. They believed Christ to be the Son of God and Saviour of men, but thought it unworthy of him to suffer, and expected he should reign upon earth, that they might be great men in his kingdom. Thence flowed their contention about pre-eminence; thence disappointment, fear, desertion, when he came to be apprehended; thence much of their grief at his death, Luke, xxiv. 21; thence much of their joy at his resurrection, Acts, i. 6. In short, there was still a gross mixture of unbelief with their faith, a deep tincture of the world in their affections.

Before

Before they were like gold in the ore as it is found in the earth ; but, when this great day of the Spirit came, they were like gold that had passed through the fire. They got other views, better thoughts, and better inclinations. They no more favoured the things that were of men, but the things that were of God. They no longer entertained vain conceits about worldly grandeur, no longer stumbled at the thoughts of a suffering Saviour ; on the contrary, they were glad, they rejoiced, they gloried in the cross of Christ. Now they lost all affection for things upon earth. To speak in the stile of our blessed Lord, they hated father, mother, possessions, fame, liberty, life, and all the world, for Christ's sake. You will say, they had done this before ; they had left all and followed Christ : but with what view we may infer from the account already given. They had hopes of preferment in the world under him ; and this is nothing rare among men to leave little in hopes of much, or much to get more ; and, whatever love they had to Christ, this shews it debased with a gross mixture

mixture of the love of the world ; but now the refining power of the Holy Ghost had purged off this earthly dreg from their affections. Now they were all love to Christ, well content with him, without any share in the world ; better pleased to be poor than to be rich, to be mean than to be high, to suffer than to live at ease for his sake. Far from courting fame or preferment in the world, they were now well satisfied to be reputed the scum and off-scouring of all things upon earth, to be made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men, for the name of Jesus. Now they made a sacrifice, an holocaust of all earthly affections, which this heavenly flame consumed. The profits, pleasures, honours of this world went all for dross with them. The strongest attachments, the nearest, the dearest ties of nature, habit, education, were become matters of indifference with them in comparison of Christ. From that day forth, their hearts bade farewell at once and for ever to the world, and whatever we can imagine desirable in it. Nay, I will say more, and what is more surprising, but my

my authority is good. They bade farewell to a dearer object than either the world or themselves. What? Even Christ himself! I mean his corporal presence on earth, of which they were so passionately fond, that all the gracious words he spake, all the gracious promises he made, could not expel the grief they had conceived at the thoughts of his departure, till the promised spirit of truth and holiness came to enlighten and purify their minds. Then they knew nothing after the flesh; yea though they had known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth they knew him no more so; 2 Cor. v. 16. Now they were all spiritual and heavenly, all light and love, all heart and soul in the service of their God and Redeemer, being baptized with the Holy Ghost as with fire.

Y SERMON

S E R M O N IV.

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY
GHOST.

MATTHEW, iii. 11. Latter clause.

*He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and
with fire.*

PART II.

III. **U**NDER the symbol of fire, the holy spirit is represented as a spirit of life and power, as well as light and purity. Heat, a known property of fire, is the great instrument of life and action. Upon it the life of every animal depends. We know not a living creature whose life can either be produced or preserved without heat. There is neither conception nor birth,

birth, breath nor strength, without it. Every animal after its kind is brought forth by its parent's heat, or the genial warmth of the sun; and it is by the heat of our blood, that fire in our veins, that the life we enjoy, is nourished and preserved. Such is the force and energy of fire. However, this is but a second cause, a mere instrument of life in the hand of God who gives life, and breath, and all things, and holds our souls in life by his gracious visitation. But the holy spirit is the original efficient cause of all spiritual life, strength, and action. He hath life in himself, and can give it to whomsoever he will. Out of stones he can raise up seed to Abraham, animate the dead, and make dry bones to live again; and he discovers a power in the operations of his grace, not only like, but infinitely beyond the force of fire in the works of nature. Accordingly, his saving work upon the soul is expressed in scripture by regeneration or second birth—by a renovation of spirit—a new creation—a resurrection from the dead, and particularly that wonderful exertion of power expressed in the resurrection of Jesus;
Ephes.

Ephes. i. 18, 19, 20. As it is the spirit of wisdom and revelation alone that can make us know, so he alone can make us feel a power which nothing in the universe can equal. There are, indeed, manifold traces of his power in nature, particularly in the activity of fire; but after all, the brightest representation of it is but faint and low. Therefore the Apostle expresses this plenitude of power in the operations of the divine spirit by a rich redundancy of language—The greatness, exceeding greatness of his power—of his mighty power. He is power itself, and his acts powerful, without any mixture of weakness; lively and free without any shadow of constraint. Hence he is called, ‘the spirit of life;’ Rom. viii. 2. ‘The spirit of power;’ 2 Tim. i. 7.; and communicates power and vivacity to the soul in which he resides. Micah, iii. 8. ‘I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord; and, 2 Cor. iii. 17. ‘Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;’ which means not merely a freedom from constraint, but vigour and sprightliness of action. As it is he that implants

implants the life of God in the soul of man, it is he that gives spirit and vigour to all our desires after God and divine things, Rom. v. 5.; that puts heart and life in all our endeavours to please him; that gives force to our prayers, sense and success to our very groans; Rom. viii. 26. More particularly, he operates like fire in giving both edge and temper to the soul, zeal and strength to pious resolutions, and to all other qualities of a gracious heart, adding firmness and fortitude of mind, without which the light and purity of the soul would soon be lost.

Though a man had the knowledge and sanctity of an angel, yet while he is in a world like this, if he have not strength of mind to resist temptations, to drive through opposition, and persevere in duty, he would be but like the angels that kept not their first estate, or, like the sow that is washed, would return to wallowing in the mire; his latter end would be worse than his beginning. But the divine spirit does not his work by halves. As he communicates of his light and purity, so likewise of his strength

strength and power to the sanctified soul. He steels it with resolution to resist and repel, or patience to bear the trials and temptations to which it may be exposed. He gives it a divine temper that does not spend itself, but improves upon resistance, and like the bow of Joseph abides in its strength. However weak, however timorous nature may form it, the spirit of grace can make the soul bold as a lion, fearless in dangers, joyful in tribulations, that neither reproach, nor poverty, nor persecution, nor death, can frighten it out of its resolution to stand by its duty. He can impregnate the heart with such courage and magnanimity, as neither the frowns nor flatterings of the world can subdue: And how many weak men, yea women, yea children, have been strengthened by his power to endure the most cruel torments, the most violent death, with courage and composure of mind, yea with all joyfulness, the history of the martyrs can bear witness.

But to cast our eye once more to the Apostles, we shall see a wonderful monument of his power. Observe them before
they

they received this powerful inspiration of the holy ghost. They were weak like other men, yea weaker than nature had formed many others; diffident, timorous, dastardly, terrified at the face of persecution. Indeed the Apostle Peter spoke like a man of courage with great warmth and vehemence, when our Lord forewarned him, and the rest of his disciples, that they would all forsake him. Mark, xiv. 31. 'If I should die with thee, yet will I not forsake thee in any wise.' Likewise also said they all: And he carried his resolution so far as to draw his sword, and wound a man in his wrath. But all came to nothing at last. No wonder; for this was but the voice of nature, not the work of the divine spirit. All forsook him to a man, and left their blessed Master alone in the hands of his enemies. Their courage at night was quite evaporated before the morning, degenerated into the contrary extreme, and the boldest man proved the greatest coward. He that threatened to fight an army was affrighted at the voice of a woman. You know the history. I speak nothing of the
Apostles

Apostles but what they said of themselves for the sake of truth. But behold what a wonderful change! After the holy spirit had enlightened, purified, and strengthened their minds, they who had been less than women became more than men. All of a sudden they were inspired with intrepidity and invincible fortitude of mind, which determined them to speak boldly as they ought to speak; 2. To do; 3. To suffer any thing for the name of Jesus.

(1.) So soon as the Apostles had received the holy spirit, they were no longer afraid to speak out what before they were fond to conceal, and might even have been tempted to deny. Acts, ii. 4. 'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak as with other tongues,' so with another mind. This was the first effect of that fortitude with which the holy spirit inspired them. They began to speak without being either afraid or ashamed. And for whom did they speak? Not for one whom the world esteemed but hated; for one whom the wise, the learned, the powerful men of the Jewish nation despised, detested,

detested, abused, as the most worthless and worst of men ; for Jesus of Nazareth whom they scourged, whom they crucified : But of whom the Apostles now considered themselves as the heralds, ambassadors, and faithful witnesses to the world. Ashamed that they never durst venture till now to bear faithful testimony to him ; vexed that they had not the courage to take his cause in hand and support his interests ; angry with themselves that they should have dishonoured him, and reproached his cause by a shameful desertion, and resolved to repair the dishonour by a bold and open confession, be it at the expence of their lives : What do they now ? Animated with the divine spirit, who had fortified them with strength in their souls, they march out of their chamber, where they were locked up for fear of the Jews, into the streets, the temple, the synagogues, and sist themselves before the seats of judgment, where they boldly protest, they loudly proclaim, that Jesus of Nazareth, the very person who had been ranked with the vilest malefactors, who had been betrayed and murdered in the most cruel and disgraceful manner, was in

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truth

truth the great Messiah, the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, of which he had given infallible demonstration by his resurrection from the dead, of which they were eye witnesses. In vain did the Sanhedrim enjoin them silence; in vain did they attempt to command, to threaten, to scourge them into compliances: But none of these things could move them, who had now received strength and courage, yea pleasure and joy to die for the name of Jesus. God hath commanded us, said they in the face of the grandees, to declare what we have seen and heard, and whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; in vain did milder counsels and better policy pretend to quell their resolution by giving them head, as if time and patience would stop their mouths, as if it would bring their counsel to nought to refrain from these men and let them alone; for this counsel was not of men but of God: in vain did others try the arts of ridicule to shame them out of their purpose, and mock them as men distracted or drunk with new wine. Drunk! said the Apostle Peter, and at such an hour
of

of the day. If this be drunkenness, far from blushing at the charge, we glory and rejoice in being thus drunk. Think of us as you please ; but know, brethren, that this is the work of God ; the accomplishment of his great and precious promise by the mouth of his Prophet Joel. ‘ In the
‘ last days I will pour out of my spirit upon
‘ all flesh :’ which promise we are not ashamed to declare, ‘ Jesus of Nazareth
‘ the Son of God, whom ye crucified, hath
‘ received of the Father, and accomplished
‘ in us, as he promised us before he ascend-
‘ ed to Heaven.’ Now they behaved like men inspired, like Prophets, like Apostles of Christ. They stood like a brazen wall, like a pillar of iron, their faces were harder than the flint ; they were not afraid of the faces of men ; they were proof against all assaults : Neither force, nor flattery, nor ridicule could avail against minds full of the spirit of power, or rather against the spirit of God himself. For they were but the organs through which he did speak, the instruments of his power, to glorify the name
of

of Jesus. As he said to his disciples, John, xvi. 14. ; and again, Matt. x. 20.

(2.) Nor did the Apostles only speak with all boldness, now that they had received the spirit of power, but they attempted and executed their designs with equal courage. Their words were not like these of vain boasters who talk big, while they can do little or nothing, and utter great swelling words of vanity, without heart or hand to perform. This proceeds from a shameful weakness, not from fortitude of mind. But their conduct gave undeniable evidence of the sincerity and strength of their resolution. They attempted, they accomplished a new thing in the earth, and, in a manner, altogether new, a work infinitely above the skill or ability of man ; to subdue the world to their own persuasion, and oblige men, of all ranks and characters, to think, to speak, to act like themselves ; to renounce their pleasures, profits, honours in the world, and expose themselves to reproach and contempt, to persecution unto death, for the sake of a person who lived a mean life in the world, and was driven out

out of it by a shameful death. A strange enterprize indeed for them! For men without power, without credit, without reputation in the world! to venture an universal reformation, what all the learned, the wise, the mighty men upon earth could never effect; to change, to renew, not the face of the earth, that were a small thing in comparison, but the hearts of mankind. But the wonder ceases when we remember that they were supported and maintained by the all-powerful Spirit of God: by strength, treasures, counsels, and arms, not their own. The weapons of their warfare were not carnal, yet mighty through God. Enlightened, purified, and strengthened by the Divine Spirit, they set out like the sun, as the Psalmist sings, Ps. xix. 5, 6, 3, 4. And they performed wonderful exploits, and conquered the world with surprising rapidity. Learned and unlearned, great and small, princes and subjects, polite and barbarous nations, black and white, all submitted unto them. Ethiopia stretched out her hands unto God, as the Psalmist prophesied, Ps. lxviii. 31. The world
received

received law from them. A new law, which, by their labours, crossed the seas, penetrated into the most inaccessible places, and was established in provinces, kingdoms, and empires; so that even these mighty conquerors of the earth, whose heroical acts have made such a mighty noise, with all their power and policy, with all their art and address, with the most numerous and well disciplined armies, have never been able to carry their conquests, I do not say farther, but so far, nor to settle them on such a lasting foundation as these few fishermen did theirs.

Nor was their success owing to any favourable disposition, any aptitude of circumstances, or lucky hit of things, or indeed to want of contradiction or opposition. For,

(3.) As they did, they suffered great things for the name of Jesus; and they counted nothing too hard to suffer for his sake. They felt, but did not fear persecution in all its various shapes, and death in its most terrible form. Their hearts did not fail, their courage did not sink, either

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at the apprehension or sight of difficulties. They were well prepared, firmly resolved, completely harnessed, perfectly proof against all assaults. Far from being dismayed, they rejoiced in tribulations, and their joy rose to its greatest elevation when they came to die for the cause of their Redeemer. Such a marvellous alteration did the spirit of power work upon their hearts. Now they were all courage, life, and zeal in the service of their Lord. And in them we have a most illustrious pattern of the powerful operations of the Divine Spirit in all the true disciples of Christ, fortifying them to speak, to act, to suffer for the name of Jesus.

Thus the Holy Ghost baptizeth the soul, operating like fire, diffusing light, purity, life through all its powers; the glorious qualities of angels, implanting and nourishing a divine nature, and forming it to a meetness for a glorious immortality; a capacity of immediate and full communion with God himself, who is light and dwelleth in light inaccessible to sense; with the cherubim and seraphim, those heavenly
fires,

fires, those burning and shining lights that surround the throne of the Most High; with the spirits of just men made perfect, that shine like the sun in the firmament, and the stars for ever and ever. Such is the nature, the design, the tendency, progress, and final result of his sanctifying influences upon the soul. But I proceed,

II. To explain whence this baptism is derived to us. Not from any virtue in the most powerful Ministers, Prophets, Apostles, whom God employs in converting and edifying his church. John the Baptist, that burning and shining light, the greatest Prophet that ever was born, till the Son of God appeared, fairly disclaims it in the words of the text. 'I baptize you with water, but to baptize with the Holy Ghost belongs to another.' The Prophets before him complained of labouring in vain, Isa. liii. 1. They promised, in the name of God, that he would put his spirit into his people, but never pretended to do this of themselves. Those that came after, I mean the Apostles, laboured to prevent any apprehensions

prehensions of this sort ; 1. Cor. iii. 5, 6, 7. It is often said, indeed, that the Holy Ghost was given by the laying on of the Apostles hands, that is meant of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, though his sanctifying influences were likewise communicated by their labours ; and so are they by the ministry of the gospel in all ages : but this does not flow from any inherent virtue in them, but a power derived from Christ Jesus, Eph. iv. 7. He alone has an inherent right and power to communicate the Divine Spirit to whom he will, and by what hands he pleases. And, therefore, says the Baptist in the text, ‘ He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.’ Indeed Christ, as Mediator, derives this power from the Father, in consequence of his satisfaction of justice for the sins of his people ; but it hath pleased the Father, that in him all fullness should dwell, Col. i. 19. and ii. 9. The spirit in all his fullness resides in him as the fountain ; and from him all, as many as are sanctified, derive the influences of the Divine Spirit, John, i. 16. And so

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the Holy Spirit is called his Spirit, Rom. viii. 9. and 1. Pet. i. 11. His gift, John, iv. 10. This he meant of the spirit, as it is explained, John, vii. 39. His vicegerent, John, xvi. 7. Acts, ii. 33. Luke, xxiv. 49. So that though sanctification or baptism with the Holy Ghost may be conveyed by the hands of men, it is only by a power derived from the Lord Jesus. He distributeth the influences of his spirit to every one severally as he will; and no man, however great or good, can sanctify a soul, but in his name, and by his power, 1. Cor. vi. 11.

But now let us proceed to point out the practical use of this subject in the order in which it has been discoursed.

1. We have heard how the Spirit of God operates upon the soul; hence we are led with sorrow to observe, what an evil spirit possesses and actuates the generality of mankind: a spirit of a contrary nature, tendency, and influence to that of the divine spirit: a spirit of ignorance and error; a spirit of impurity; a spirit of indifference

difference and lukewarmness in the things of God and another life. In short, a spirit which the scripture defines under one general character, comprehending all that is vicious and vile, and directly opposite to the Spirit of God; that is, 'The spirit of the world.' 1. Cor. ii. 12, so called, because the judgment, will, and affections of unsanctified souls chiefly run to and center in the things of this world. The love of the world is their leading principle: that woful passion for the profits, pleasures, and honours of this life, which excludes, resists, repels, extinguishes the love of God, with every sanctified and heavenly affection; James, iv. 4. and 1. John, ii. 15, 16. The world is the object of their esteem, their wish, their will, their work, come of their souls and another world what will. Nor does this spirit prevail only in the minds of heathens who have no better light than the dark and doubtful hints of nature to guide them, but in thousands that profess to believe, that have opportunity to hear, and capacity to understand, the revelation of the Spirit of God.

God in the Gospel. They deliberate, they chuse, they manage their affairs according to the spirit of the world; their conversation breathes nothing but the spirit of the world; their connections, acquaintances, societies are formed by the spirit of the world; their fashions, their customs, their manners are regulated by the spirit of the world. By this their judgment is directed, their language formed, their actions squared, and, shall I venture to say, their religion planned. They would even serve God according to the spirit of the world, and accommodate their devotion to the spirit of the world. And, because the spirit of the world is a spirit of falsehood, a spirit of error, a spirit of imposture and dissimulation, by necessary consequence, whatever flows from it with an appearance of good must be falsehood, forgery, and mere appearance. Hence false honours, false pleasures, false profits, false praises, are all the reward of worldly minds. And, with respect to their character, it is, at best, a composition of counterfeit virtues. Their prudence is but craft; their moderation, indifference; their equity, selfishness;

ness; their generosity, ostentation; their integrity, affectation; and their religion a mere form of Godliness, a piece of painting without life, strong colours of devotion, shews of humility, shapes of repentance, blind zeal for God, and mock-charity for men. Thus the lying spirit of the world, to secure the possession of the heart, colours up a lying appearance of religion to please it, by which men may impose upon others, but effectually deceive themselves, and teaches them an art, an infernal art of concealing what they are, and appearing what they are not. A spirit that enchants and bewitches every power of the mind, and keeps it ever hankering after the things of the world in any place on any occasion. If it admit of any religion, it is only such as will suit the fashion and purposes of the world. And if religion should wear out of fashion, worldly minds would soon wear out of religion. But while it helps to keep up their credit, to promote their interest, to secure their ease in the world, the spirit of the world can make its use of religion. If such serve God, it is not for nought. God may have as much of their service

service as the love of the world will allow. And, alas! there is but too much reason to fear that this is the most general and extensive religion in the world. The spirit of the world spreads its dominion through all the different sects and parties that divide mankind, however wide of one another in other respects. Jews and Gentiles, Papists and Protestants, and all their subdivisions furnish multitudes of men worldly minded, lovers of riches, lovers of honours, lovers of pleasures in the world, more than lovers of God. Nor does this spirit confine its pernicious influence to men of one rank among all the different parties, but diffuses itself through all the different classes and stations of men. It is not merely the rich and the great that are swayed by the spirit of the world, but the poor and mean. It is this that makes rich men proud, insolent, revengeful; and what else makes poor men envious, greedy, and discontented, but the spirit of the world. It is the same principle in both that makes the one vain with the possession, and the other uneasy with the want of the things of this world.

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Thence wars and fightings, emulations, wrath, strife, &c. and all these evils that depopulate nations, disturb the peace of persons, families, societies, neighbourhoods, and ruin souls and bodies by thousands. What a deplorable case! that immortal souls, the noblest work of God in this lower world, should be so much taken up with the perishing comforts of a perishing life, as to covet, to purchase, to secure them at the expence of all that is truly good and great, and glorious; and should tamely drudge to the spirit of the world, rather than be directed by the blessed Spirit of God.

2. Hence we are called to try, every man for himself, what manner of spirit we are of, whether of the spirit of the world, or the Spirit of God. By their fruits we shall know them; for a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit, neither a corrupt tree good fruit. The Spirit of God can never be the author of bad dispositions, nor the spirit of the world the parent of sanctified affections. But as their nature, so their fruits are contrary. The fruits of the flesh, or spirit of the world, are enumerated by
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the Apostle, Gal. v. 16. So are the fruits of the Spirit of God, v. 22. Let us bring our thoughts, words, and actions, to this test, and try between God and our own souls what is the leading principle, what the habitual dispositions of our minds, what the general bent of our language, what the chief spring and main end of our actions. If it be the love of God, and the things of another life, then we are actuated by the Spirit of God. If it be a regard to any thing in this world, then we are under the dominion of the spirit of the world. But, to judge righteous judgment concerning ourselves, let us remember that there is no character in this world without mixture; no man so perfectly good but that he has something bad, or so completely wicked but that he may have something commendable; and, therefore, that we ought not only to attend to particular acts or articles of good and bad life, but to the whole sum, that we may see on which side the difference lies. For it is the general or common cast of heart and life that forms the character. And though it requires
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narrow observation, time and patience to know ourselves, yet it is a matter of the last importance to us, and the more necessary, that it is a work no man can do for us. We cannot employ a proxy to search our hearts, and look through our consciences. But this we may do for ourselves; and, as we find our hearts affected, we may judge of our characters. For out of the heart are the issues of life; and out of the heart are the causes of death.

3. From what has been said, we may see what is our duty in order to be converted and edified unto eternal life: that is, to comply with the operations of the Holy Spirit; to work together with him, in order to enlighten, purify, and strengthen our souls in the service of our God and Redeemer. If this be his work, his will, his design concerning us, surely it should be ours. For what the Spirit of God wills is the law of his creatures; what he works is their example, and it is their indispensable duty to imitate; and what he designs is the highest, the best, the noblest end they can aim at; besides that the profit is all our own. For what gain is it to the Al-

mighty if we make our ways perfect, Job, xxii. 3. and xxxv. 6, 7. It is as much our interest as it is our duty to comply with his gracious purposes. And, therefore, says the Apostle, Phil. ii. 12, 13. 'Work out your salvation, for it is God that worketh in you.' But it may be said, we have neither ability nor inclination to this work, till the Holy Spirit work it in us, and though we had, yet, without his sanctifying influence, our working should be vain! The premises are true, but what is the conclusion? That, therefore, we do as well to be idle, and never to mind it. God forbid! Sure the Spirit of God did not mean so when he commanded us, by the mouth of the Apostle, to work out our salvation; but that we ought to do what men can do, if ever we expect that God should do in us and for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Now let us not belie God, and deceive our own souls, but trust to divine grace, and try fairly what we can do for our own souls. As it is a most reasonable service, so God has made it necessary that we should exert our endeavours to the utmost, and stretch all that is man in

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us, in order to gain our own souls. And let us never say we want either will or power till we make a trial of it. For though we have none of ourselves, yet the Holy Spirit may have wrought in us, though we know it not. For his operations are not always sensible. Grace may lurk in the soul like fire under ashes, and needs to be put into motion before it will flame. Therefore, says the Apostle to Timothy, 2. Ep. i. 6. 'Stir up,' or, as it runs in the original, 'Blow up the gift of God that 'is in thee:' alluding to this very image, by which the text represents the influences of the Divine Spirit, and plainly teaching that it is the duty of men to try and exercise what strength God has imparted to them; and, at the same time, to remember that whatever they find themselves able to do, that it is all the gift of God unto them, and all the glory of the work belongs unto him. Nay, the Holy Spirit so far relieves the natural weakness of all men, as to make them capable of a serious exercise of reason, and works in the minds, even of the unregenerated, otherwise it had
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never been said in the word of God that he strives with them, and that they resist him. Besides, it ought not to be forgotten on this argument, that even the powers of naked nature go much farther than men generally drive them. We see that the eyes of the world will restrain men from the criminal actions that they greedily commit in secret, and will oblige them to bridle their strongest passions, affections, and appetites upon particular occasions : that the same consideration will spur them on to laudable attempts : that the servant will be honest under the eye of his master, and the soldier brave in the sight of his general. The most impudent will appear modest in company ; the most voluptuous, temperate ; the most covetous, liberal ; the most passionate, calm and composed ; the drunkard, the swearer, the liar, the thief, the unclean, in short, the most abandoned man that ever lived is so far master of himself as to be able at some time, in some place, in some circumstances, on some one occasion or other, to deny himself, to resist, to check, to restrain, to keep down the most furious lust, passion, or
appetite

appetite of his nature. It is notour to the world what mighty lengths a nice sense of honour will drive some men; how strongly fear will work upon some, favour on others; the force of human laws upon the generality; interest and necessity upon all: So that the weakest man, when he is properly urged, and thoroughly resolved, is capable of going far beyond his ordinary exertions; much more in the glorious attempt of his own reformation, when we consider that he is not alone in this matter, but that the Holy Spirit of God is ready to back all his endeavours and crown them with success. And, therefore, though the Apostle very well knew, and in the forecited passage plainly enough hinted, that we have neither will nor power of ourselves to work out our salvation, yet he commands us to do it for this good reason, 'that it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do;' and that not out of any regard to our good works, nor in a backward and dilatory way, but of his own good pleasure, out of pure good will. After this it is as much a shame as a sin for any man to pretend want of ability

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ability or inclination to labour for his soul, and comply with the gracious operations of the divine spirit. He goes before us; and, if we are honest in our endeavours, he will not leave us. 'The Lord is with us while we are with him, but if we forsake him he also will forsake us;' 2 Chron. xv. 2. Let us therefore mark the way of the spirit, in order to will, to work, to design as he does.

He diffuses light, the light of truth, through the soul like fire.

II (1.) Our duty correspondent to this is to study to attain the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus: Not to satisfy ourselves with an ordinary degree of knowledge in things that concern our salvation, or merely with understanding the fundamental doctrines of our religion; but strive to grow in the knowledge of Christ; 2 Pet. iii. 18.; not only to hold fast what we have, but to acquire more, and amass treasures of truth in our minds; Col. iii. 16. Learn, as the spirit teacheth, to know all truth, as much of it as our narrow capacities and short span of time in the world will

will allow, and rise to the greatest perfection of all useful knowledge that we can. Every man should be expert in the knowledge of his own trade, and every Christian well versed in the things that concern his eternal peace, which he may well be, considering his advantages. We may be good scholars, seeing we have such a good master; in which we have the advantage of all others. Our heavenly instructor can teach us more and more effectually than all our teachers upon earth, and by the most simple means; 1 Cor. ii. 4, 13. In him we have a counsellor and guide to our wish: nothing to our cost: such as the Son of God paid for with his precious blood; such as God bestows on them he loves; such as never did, never will, never can misguide a single soul. If we grow not wise by his instruction, it must be our sin, our shame, our condemnation at last, and we shall never profit to salvation by the labours of another. Who can undertake to teach those who refuse to be instructed by the Spirit of God? Let us therefore exert ourselves under his direction, depending upon his grace for a
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more extensive knowledge of saving truth, a more enlarged and enlightened mind.

(2.) He is a spirit of holiness. Our duty correspondent to his purifying influence, it is, as the Apostle exhorts, 2 Cor. vii. 1. 'To purify ourselves from all uncleanness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.' It should be our continual care to correct, to retrench, to remove whatever is earthly, sensual, impure, in our thoughts, words, or actions; and to have nothing but what is good for the object, the end, the rule of our conduct. Agreeable to what the Apostle enjoins, Phil. iv. 8. It is the proper work of a Christian, 'to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;' Gal. v. 24. 'To live in the spirit, and walk in the spirit;' verse 25. Whatever we know to be contrary to the mind of the spirit we are carefully to avoid, if we wish his work to prosper in our souls; and whatever we perceive agreeable to his will, we ought with equal care to cherish and support.

(3.) As it is the work of the Divine Spirit to inspire the soul with life and zeal in
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the service of God, with vigour and resolution of mind to speak, to act, to suffer, for the support of his cause. Our duty correspondent to this, is to fortify our minds, to use all proper means to confirm our resolutions, and our endeavours to do or to suffer according to the will of God. To appear timid and bashful in the defence of innocence, truth, and goodness, to be silent when we ought to speak, to be idle or indifferent when we ought to act, to fly when we ought to suffer, is to reproach the cause and affront the Spirit of God, as if he were a spirit of sloth, a spirit of fear, who is the spirit of life and the spirit of power. Let us learn to take a good heart in a good cause, to strengthen our hands in God as Jonathan did; or, as the Apostle exhorts, 'learn to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;' Ephes. vi. 10. We have much use for courage and resolution, though we had not an enemy without ourselves—much more when we consider what a world we live in.—And all the trials of courage we have hitherto met, may be only preludes to introduce harder and hotter

service. We may suffer persecution, we may suffer death, if we will not part with our religion ; and it will be our wisdom to prepare for the worst, and learn ‘ not to fear
 ‘ them who can only kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do ;
 ‘ but to fear him, who after he hath killed the body, can cast both soul and body into hell ;’ Luke, xii. 4. 5.

(4.) We have heard that the Lord Jesus Christ alone has the right and power of dispensing his Holy Spirit unto men : This teaches us to look beyond all means and all endeavours, and to rest upon his fulness and sufficiency alone for obtaining the Divine Spirit. The grace that we need is in Christ Jesus, and whence should we expect it, where should we seek it, but in him ? Without him our attempts are vain, our baptism, our privileges, our profession vain ; unless he baptize us, we shall never be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

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S E R M O N VII.

CHRISTIAN LOVE.

EPHESIANS, v. 2.

And walk in love.

THE Apostle, in all his Epistles, wisely suits general precepts, admonitions, exhortations, to the particular circumstances of the churches to whom he writes. In this Epistle to the Ephesians, among whom some private quarrels had arisen, to the disturbance of the common peace, the dishonour of religion, and the hurt of their own souls, he sets himself, with all the force of both argument and affection, by reasoning from the most powerful considerations that the profession of Christianity could furnish, to persuade them to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; to be kind

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one to another, tender hearted, and to forgive one another. And as example is the plainest and shortest lesson to practice, he winds up his argument by proposing the most glorious examples of love.

God the Father hath loved us so as to send his only Son to purchase our pardon by his obedience unto death; and for his sake he hath forgiven us. We ought therefore to be followers of God, and to walk in love after his example. God the Son hath also loved us so as to assume the form of a servant, and give himself a sacrifice for us. Marvellous loving kindness indeed, if a miracle be a singular and surprising work! An example truly divine, superlatively great and glorious! such as the world could never expect, never believe without a revelation from heaven. Human reason could have no premisses upon which to ground a conclusion in this case. Experience could never furnish a parallel. The most busy and boundless power of the mind, that rests not night nor day, asleep or awake, and delights in forging wonders, could never fable such a device; the shadow of this miracle
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could never fall within the wide dominions of fancy, that the Son of God should become man, to shew men a pattern of love, at the expence of suffering the death of the cross. Let us look here if we would learn to love, and endeavour to form our taste, to dispose our hearts, and guide our hands to imitate this great original.

In discoursing of this exhortation, *Walk in love*, I shall,

- I. Consider the nature of brotherly love.
- II. Explain what is implied in the expression, *Walk in love*.
- III. Suggest some advices to those who wish so to walk.

I. Brotherly love will discover its nature by a particular consideration of its principal ingredients.

1. It is a principal ingredient of brotherly love to value and esteem others. For no man can love what he does not value in some degree, and every one puts a price on what he loves. Nor can any thing be both amiable and contemptible at the same time,

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in the same respect. There could be no obligation to love if there were none to esteem; and the law which obliges us to love every man, obliges us to esteem him; for every man, even the worst of men, is in many respects a valuable creature, and worthy of our regard. We are all God's offspring—all the workmanship of his hands—all fellow creatures of the same original; and therefore every one ought to esteem his fellow: no one can despise another without reproaching his Maker, and dishonouring himself, Job, xxxi. 13, 14, 15.—All endowed with the same faculties—entitled to the same privileges—fitted for the same end—capable of the same hope—called to the same faith—cherished by the same Providence, which is kind to all, and filleth the hearts of all men with food and gladness. These are all such solid and substantial grounds of respect and esteem from every one of the human race to another, that, as the wise man saith, 'he must be void of understanding who despiseth his neighbour,' Prov. ii. 12. Be our neighbour what he will in other respects, upon these

these accounts he has an indelible title to our esteem. Neither the meanness of his circumstances, the weakness of his faculties, nor even the greatness and multitude of his crimes, can rob him of his right to our regard. For though, indeed, arts and habits of vice debase the soul of man, yet they cannot erase the characters of divinity imprinted upon it. 'Go bury this cursed woman,' said Jehu of Jezebel, 'for she is a king's daughter;' judging respect still due to her extraction, however much she had disgraced it. An immortal soul, the offspring of God, is still within the reach of divine mercy; and who can tell but God may renew the most wicked man in the spirit of his mind? We ought to look upon the diseased souls of men as we would do upon a near friend, under the most loathsome diseases of body. We know, in this case, how to distinguish between the man and his disease, and so ought we to do in the other. To teach us this, God provided, in his law by Moses, that the wicked man should not be beaten above measure, lest he should seem vile unto his brethren,

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Deut. xxv. 3. God hath made all men of one blood, every man brother to another; and upon the same common principles that a man claims respect to himself, he owes it to every other man, who is but another self, though perhaps in a very different habit. However widely we may differ from others, the things wherein all agree are much more important than those wherein we differ. Let no man therefore set another at nought, but every man learn to honour all men, 1 Pet. ii. 17. As it is glorifying God, it is doing honour to ourselves to maintain a due respect to every one of our kind.

2. The love of our neighbour implies a sincere and earnest desire of his welfare in every respect, consistently with our own and that of others. For the interests of men may often cross one another; and, as there are different degrees of connection among mankind, the nearer obligations are first to be regarded. For the same reason that we wish well to any, we are bound to do so, in the first place, to those with whom we are most nearly concerned. But where
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the happiness of one man is noways incompatible with that of any other, there brotherly love requires we should wish him as well as a brother or friend; for no man can be supposed to love him sincerely whom he does not wish perfectly well in all respects that can neither injure himself nor any other. It is a property of love to wish well to every object it affects, to desire its prosperity, and delight in its well-being. The truth of this we may read in all the various pursuits of the human heart. Wherever it settles, be it upon the most arant trifles in the world, it wishes them to flourish and prosper, to be and continue in the best state of which they are capable. Nor can it cease to be concerned for the welfare of any thing without ceasing to love it. Neither can we cease sincerely to desire the happiness of all men, while we continue sincerely to love them; and the fervency of our desires for their good will ever bear a proportion to the vehemence of our love. If we love our neighbour, therefore, as we ought, we will not look upon any man with an indifferent eye, or a cold and un-

concerned heart, as if he were a creature no ways connected with us; but, if we have neither power nor opportunity to do more, we will sincerely desire that he may prosper in every respect in his health, safety, reputation, industry; but, above all things, that his soul may prosper; that he may learn to be good and wise, to fit him for that glorious immortality for which he is framed.

This is the foundation of that precept in our holy religion, *Pray for all men.* This is expressing our best wishes in the best manner for them: and to this the worst of men, and the most mischievous to ourselves, have an indispensable title. 'Bless them' 'that curse you, pray for them that persecute you,' was the command of our blessed Lord, and supported by his own example. He prayed for his very murderers, even when he was dying by their hands, 'Father forgive them.' Such was the charity of Stephen, when they were stoning him to death, 'Lord lay not this' 'to their charge;' such was that of the

Apostle

Apostle Paul, Rom. x. 1. and such our's ought to be.

3. It is another ingredient in the nature of brotherly love, to feel complacence and satisfaction in the good of our neighbour. This is a natural and necessary consequence of our sincere desires and kind wishes for his prosperity. We must feel a pleasure in the accomplishment of our own wishes, and rejoice in the joy of them we love. Far from envying, grieving, or repining at the rising reputation or prosperous state of others, the character of little souls, love feels a pleasure in their virtue and happiness, and draws a tribute of delight from their merit and success to heighten our own. The benignity of love is an additional fund of felicity to the soul which it possesses. It shares in the enjoyments, feasts on the pleasures, and triumphs in the prosperity of all we love: and we partake in the merit of virtues which ourselves cannot reach, by contemplating them in others with delight. Such is at once the work and the reward of brotherly love in the soul. It takes a pleasure in the welfare of others in every

every respect, in proportion to the importance of it, but, above all, in the improvement of their minds, their growth in grace, and gradual advancement to perfection. All the spirits of just men made perfect might be cited as examples of this. 'I have no greater joy,' said the beloved disciple of Christ, 'than to see my children walking in the truth.' How often and how warmly does the Apostle Paul express his joy in the faith, the knowledge, the virtue and good conversation of those to whom he writes? All the angels in heaven might be adduced as evidences of this. They rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. What is infinitely more, God himself delights in the conversion of sinners, and beholds the upright with a pleasant countenance. The prosperity of men's souls is called, in his word, 'the pleasure of the Lord.' And how much the gracious Redeemer of souls delights in this, judge by the invaluable price he paid for their redemption.

4. On the other hand, correspondently to this, brotherly love feels pity and *com-*
miseration

miseration for the distresses of others. It runs shares in the pains as well as the pleasures of others; condoles their miseries, as it congratulates their happiness. As love rejoices with them that do rejoice, it weeps with them that weep; remembers them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and communicates with their affliction. It feels for the unhappy, and stirs the bowels of compassion in the charitable mind. Thus it did operate in the heart of Job, xxx. 25. 'Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the 'poor?' And the Psalmist, xxxv. 12, 13, 14. 'They rewarded me evil for good,— 'But as for me, when they were sick, my 'cloathing was sackcloth: I humbled my 'soul with fasting,—I behaved myself as 'though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that 'mourneth for his mother.' But to finish all examples in one, look to Jesus our fore-runner, and behold the perfection of love to the miserable in the tender feelings of his heart, manifested by the gracious operations of his hands. Matt. ix. 35, 36.

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‘ When he saw the multitudes, he was
‘ moved with compassion on them, and
‘ healed every sickness and every disease
‘ among them.’ And xv. 32. Jesus said,
‘ I have compassion on the multitude, be-
‘ cause they have nothing to eat, and I will
‘ not send them away fasting, lest they faint
‘ in the way.’ And Mark, i. 41. ‘ Jesus,
‘ moved with compassion, put forth his
‘ hand, and touched him, and said unto
‘ him, I will; be thou clean.’ And Luke,
vii. 13, 14. ‘ When the Lord saw the dis-
‘ console widow weeping for the death
‘ of her only son, he had compassion on
‘ her, and said unto her, weep not. And
‘ he came and touched the bier, and said;
‘ young man, arise, and he arose.’ Such
was his compassion to miserable men, that
it made him weep for his own murderers.
Luke, xix. 41, 42. His love was perfect,
and, therefore, compassion had her perfect
work in him. This was the prime mover
in all the sorrows and sufferings he endu-
red for the salvation of men. He saw
their souls ready to perish, cast out into the
wide world, wallowing in their own blood,

no eye to pity, no hand to help them ; his bowels were troubled for them, his soul was grieved for their miseries ; he was afflicted in their afflictions, and in his love and pity he redeemed them, and redeemed them with his own blood. Rather than see them perish, he was resolved to suffer death of any kind, in any form that the justice of God could exact, and suffered accordingly. Marvellous love indeed, that could work such marvellous compassion ! And all who have a like mind will feel the distresses of others in like manner, and especially feel compassion for the sin and misery of their souls. For these have the first title to our regard. And if we have a sincere love for our fellow creatures, can we see them running in the way to perdition, without pity ; dishonouring God, wounding their own souls, and exposing themselves to misery inconceivable, endless, and without remedy, against the day of revelation of God's righteous judgment ? Such thoughts cannot fail mightily to move a charitable mind. I beheld the transgressors and was grieved, says the Psalmist. ' Ri-

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'vers of waters run down mine eye, because they keep not thy law. O that my head were a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people,' says Jeremiah, ix. 1. 'I have great heaviness and continual sorrow at my heart, for my kinsmen,' says the Apostle Paul, Rom. ix. 2. Such is the work of brotherly love.

5. Love to our neighbours will prompt us to do them good on all occasions, as we have power and opportunity. For love is an active, sprightly, and industrious principal, and, therefore, will not sit contented with favourable opinions, kind affections, lazy wishes, or languid efforts, to serve the persons we love, but will be up, and doing what it can, when it may, for their benefit or consolation. Withal, it is a courageous and hardy disposition of mind that makes no great account of inconveniencies, difficulties, dangers, in the way of accomplishing its designs, that delights to shew its power, and give proof of its sincerity. For he who will neither put himself to trouble
nor

nor expence to serve us when it is in his power, plainly bewrays the emptiness of all his pretensions to love. It is not merely willing, wishing, praying, speaking well for others, that can assure them of our love, but actually doing them good according to our ability. If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and we say unto them, depart in peace, be warmed, be filled, notwithstanding we give them not those things that are needful for the body, what doth it profit? James, ii. 15, 16. Indeed the heart may be full, though the hand be empty; so that a man cannot do, what he cheerfully would for the relief and benefit of others. In that case the will is accepted according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not. 2 Cor. viii. 12.

But if we have power and occasion to do good to others, and do it not, we may speak the language, but know nothing of the power or labour of love. With whom the heart is in love, for them it will labour to do good of all kinds, and on all occasions according to their need and our ability;

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ty; it will ever be ready to relieve the necessities of the poor, to comfort the afflicted, to support the weak, to visit the sick, to instruct the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, to reclaim the vicious, to caution the simple, to advise the doubtful and perplexed mind, to protect the innocent, to be kind and hospitable to strangers, and, in short, to run to the assistance of all that need the help we can give. Hear the sweet accents of this divine principle in the language of Job, xxix, 12, 13, 15, 16. 'I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him: the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame; I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out; and I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.' He eat not his morsel alone, nor could see any perish for want of cloathing, or any poor without covering, he opened his door to

to the traveller, and suffered not strangers to lodge in the streets.

It was perfect love in the heart of our divine Saviour that made him go about continually doing good, not only to the bodies, but especially to the souls of men; he taught us the nature of brotherly love in the most clear and convincing way by his own example; counting nothing hard to himself that could serve the real interests of others.

II. Having seen what brotherly love appears to include, Let us go on to consider what is implied in the expression, '*Walk in love.*'

This form of language often occurs in scripture, is borrowed from common life, and fitly represents the general tenor of our practice. The exhortation supposes,

I. That we are apt to act otherwise. Were we beyond all danger of hating, envying, despising, neglecting, or living indifferent with respect to the good of others, an exhortation to live in love with them would be needless. But, to creatures of
our

our temper, the exhortation is fit, seasonable, and necessary, being grounded upon the supposition that we are apt to follow the dictates of dispositions contrary to love. It is the sad cast of human nature to live in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another, as the Apostle declares, Tit. iii. 3. And the best of men are not so entirely freed from all remains of such noxious inclinations, but that they stand in need of counsel, entreaties, exhortations to live in love. For although man be a social creature, and formed to love his own kind, yet our nature is perverted, and the selfish prevail against the social affections; so that upon the least interfering of interests, ruffling of passions, or crossing our humours, of which this world affords abundant matter daily, we are bent upon anger, dislike, and revenge. And to maintain a kind and affectionate heart to those from whom we are daily receiving injuries, affronts, and abuses, is a lesson hard to go down with corrupt nature, and therefore the more needful to be warmly and frequently inculcated.

to maintain a kind and affectionate heart to those from whom we are daily receiving injuries, affronts, and abuses, is a lesson hard to go down with corrupt nature, and therefore the more needful to be warmly and frequently inculcated. 2.

2. This exhortation means love in action and exercise; that we should not only entertain affection to others in our hearts, but, as we can, give proof of it in our life. For *walking* is a proper emblem of active life in opposition to an indolent, dull, and drowsy state. A man's love, like his life, may be lulled asleep. And as he may live in his sleep, so he may sleep in his love. But as sleep is liker death than life, so a lethargic, and lazy kind of love, that may raise some faint stir in the bowels, or merely breathe good will to others, without stirring a foot for their benefit, is liker a soul dead in sin than alive unto God. The soul must not sit or sleep but walk in love. It is not enough that we love our neighbours so as to think well of them, to wish well to them, to be pleased with their happiness, to be sorry for their miseries; in short, that we have a love of benevolence or good intention towards them; but what comprehends all, we must have a love of beneficence, or doing them good on all occasions, according to our ability. This, as I have already shewn, is an essential qualification

fication of brotherly love. This shews our love to be in life and health. This declares it to be without dissimulation. We cannot be said to walk in love, unless we be active and industrious in doing good.

3. This form of speech intimates that our love is capable of improvement. For walking is a progressive motion, a gradual advance to the end of our journey. And so our love should be continually gaining ground, making nearer and nearer approaches to perfection, without minding the rubs or discouragements we meet in our way, without flagging or fainting under the exercises of it, agreeably to the Apostle's exhortation, Gal. vi. 9. 'Weary not in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not.' For charity endureth all things—It covereth a multitude of offences—And many waters cannot quench it. If it is of the true heavenly stamp, it will hold on its way in the face of many neglects, many affronts, many provocations; still advancing from strength to strength, till at last it is made perfect in Zion. Such was the charity of the Thessalonians; for
which

which the Apostle most affectionately thanks God. This he does in his first Epistle to them, 1 ch. 2, 3, vs. And finding, by the time he wrote his second, that their faith and love still encreased, he repeats it in these terms, 2 Theff. i. 3. 'We are bound
' to thank God always for you, Brethren,
' as it is meet; because that your faith
' groweth exceedingly, and the love of
' every one of you all towards each other
' aboundeth.' In like manner he writes to the Hebrews in language that imports the continual exercise and improvement of love, 6 ch. 10, 11, 12. As work and labour is always making progress till it comes to the finishing stroke, he makes use of these expressions to denote the activity and increase of their love. 'God, says he, is
' not unrighteous to forget your work and
' labour of love, which ye have shewed
' towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And
' we desire that every one of you do shew
' the same diligence, to the full assurance
' of hope unto the end: that ye be not
' slothful, but followers of them, who
' through

‘ through faith and patience inherit the
‘ promises.’ And his way of expressing
himself in the text is evidently intended
to convey the same lesson to our minds.
‘ Walk in love.’

4. This manner of address is proper to
denote a liberty and largeness of heart in
the expressions of our love. It is not to
be fettered and confined, not to be cramped
in its action and exercise, not to be stinted
and straitened; not merely to move like a
door on its hinges, that can sweep backward
and forward with drawing and pushing,
but cannot change its place; or like men
confined in a ship or a coach, that may sail
or travel from sea to sea, or from land to
land, without any proper motion of their
own: but the soul is to walk, to live at
large in love, to have full scope and free
exercise. The heart is to be enlarged to
embrace all proper objects on all proper oc-
casions, and to testify its love by all proper
means within the compass of our power.
We are not to be scrimp and niggardly in
our affection, not narrow-minded in our
notions of brotherly love; nor starch, nor
reserved,

reserved, nor tardy in our motions to do good to others ; but to be frank, alert, and cheerful. Such a noble and high-born principle as love deserves free air to breathe, full room to walk.

III. It only now remains that I suggest some advices to those who wish to walk in love.

1. If we would learn to love one another, we must guard against selfishness. Self-love is a principle deeply engraven on every heart, and wisely laid in the constitution of every creature, by the hand of the great Creator ; but, like all other passions, it is capable of excess, and as much more ready to fly to extremes, as it is stronger and keener than other principles of the mind. Experience abundantly confirms what we might conclude from the nature and reason of the thing. For what puts this world into such confusion, and sets every man's hand against his brother, but an immoderate esteem of and affection for himself ? A violent and irregular attachment to our own particular persons, opinions, pleasures, pro-

fits, preferments, eats out and destroys our regards to others, and begets and fosters dislike, contempt, hatred, anger, envy, revenge, and such other guilty passions as plague others and prey upon ourselves. Therefore the Apostle gives it as a character of the worst times. 2 Timothy, iii. 2. 'Men shall be lovers of themselves;' that is, to excess and to the hurt of others. For when we love others less than we should, we love ourselves more than we ought. And such are the lovers of themselves whom the Apostle here marks with reproach. They shall be self-conceited, self-willed, self-confident, vain, self-interested, as if they were the only persons themselves that deserved any regard or esteem. This is such a depravation of mind as must unhinge all the bands of society, and ripen the world for final vengeance: a mischief, when it is become general, that nothing but the besom of destruction can sweep away. And therefore if we would be social, we must not be selfish. If we would love others more, we must love ourselves less.

For

For God designed the selfish and the social passions as a counterpoise to one another. This is the second great law of our nature, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' The love of our neighbour keeps the love of ourselves within due bounds, and the love of ourselves secures us from exceeding in the love of others. And therefore we should look upon ourselves as but one of many who have a title to our affection, and learn not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, if we would learn to love and think well of others.

2. We should guard against prejudice, or forming a wrong judgment of others. A groundless suspicion, a vain fancy, an idle report, a slight disobligement, will often give them a very odious appearance to our minds, and instruct us to aggravate their faults, to overlook and decry their commendable qualities; a way of judging very pernicious in its nature. For it is committing a triple violence at one blow. It wounds the truth, injures our neighbour, and wrongs our own souls. And it is no better in its consequences. It prevents kindness,

kindness, breeds dislike, opens a way to mutual jealousies, evil surmises, contention, jangling, and debate ; whispering, reviling, flandering, backbiting, and all such dispositions and actions as tend to blast the generous principle of brotherly love in the heart. We are not therefore to conclude any thing rashly to the disadvantage of our neighbour : And if fair and full formed evidence oblige us to disapprove and condemn his conduct, we are not thereby obliged to dislike his person. But charity requires, and truth and justice will bear it, to make proper allowances for his infirmities, temptations, and all concurring circumstances that tend to extenuate his guilt, and even at the worst, to compassionate, to pray for and restore an offending brother in the spirit of meekness, but never to persecute him with a spirit of bitterness ; especially considering that we ourselves are in the body and liable to the like ; Gal. vi. 1. 2.

3. We should endeavour, as much as the proper duties of our life and station will permit, to cultivate acquaintance and good neighbourhood one with another. We are
not

not indeed to spend our time in visiting others at the expence of neglecting our domestic concerns. Every man is first to mind his own business, quietly to work and eat his own bread, as the Apostle exhorts the Thessalonians. But when necessary business demands a breathing time, such intervals may be well bestowed on a friendly visit, and not only spent agreeably but usefully both to ourselves and others. For common civilities, and the mutual intercourse of kind and good offices, help mightily to fasten heart to heart, and cherish mutual love. And how often do we see that a soft word, a kind look, a tender accent, a trifling service, a gentle and courteous demeanour, will gain the esteem, kindle affection in the hearts, and shed a pleasure on the faces of a company? Bad as the world is, men are seldom so unjust, or so unnatural, as not to feel sentiments of love and esteem for those who take all opportunities they can to render themselves useful and agreeable to them, and it is by such friendly correspondence that love groweth exceedingly. O let us, then,
make

make it a study to walk in love, and dwell together like brethren in unity. And may the God of love, who hath so loved us, increase our love more and more, till he hath made us perfect in love in his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand where are pleasures for evermore, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N VIII.

THE PASSING NATURE OF THIS
WORLD.

I CORINTHIANS, vii. 31. Latter Clause.

For the fashion of this world passeth away.

IN answer to some questions which the Corinthians had put to the Apostle concerning marriage, he tells them that as marriage was in itself lawful, every man and woman were at liberty to judge for themselves whether it was necessary for them. But if they found it not necessary, that it was better, in the unsettled state of Christianity at that time, to keep themselves free from the cares and toils of providing for a family, and of carrying them about from place to place, that they might be at greater liberty to care for the things of the Lord, to propagate

propagate and support the Gospel. He adds, however, that if persons were already married, they were not to seek to be loosed on this pretence, even although they were joined to infidels; but that in every relation of life they should make it their principal care and concern to serve the Lord. He teaches Christians that they should not much mind either the pains or the pleasures of this life, but learn to live with that indifference to every enjoyment in this world, which became those who had a better and more enduring substance in view. For, as to this world, there is nothing durable or satisfying in it. 'The fashion of this world passeth away.'

In the original language, the word translated 'fashion,' properly denotes the form, scheme, or figure of this world. By the use of this expression the Apostle, contrasting the state of this world with that which is to come, seems to consider this as the substance, that as the shadow;—the one as solid truth, the other as mere appearance;—the one as permanent and durable, the other as fleeting and visionary. And his
 language

language seems to allude to the common entertainments of Greece, with which the Corinthians were well acquainted, *viz.* these of the theatre, on which all the different characters in life were personated or represented. Now, a tragedy, wherein they beheld a person figured out in all the circumstances of distress most capable to move pity, and which was often wrought up and acted with such art and delicacy as obliged the spectators to weep, though all was mere fiction: Then, a comedy, in which fools were artfully exposed to the laughter and ridicule of mankind, and which served to give sport and merriment to the beholders, though all was but mimicry and mere invention: At other times a tragi-comedy, a composition of the two, intended to awaken both grief and joy by turns, while the scene was perpetually shifting and passing away to give place to another; and all was but a play upon the fancies and passions of men, of which, if they were sufficiently aware, they would not be much moved by either the one or the other, nor neglect serious business to attend upon trifles. Such

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does the Apostle here represent this world to be, when he calls it the figure or fashion of a world passing away. A thing like to a stage, continually varying its form in a perpetual succession of scenes and characters; continually creating pain or pleasure; and, therefore, little to be minded; yea, worthy of a Christian's contempt, when it tends to interrupt the serious and important concerns of his soul.

Such is the argument the Apostle here makes use of to persuade Christians to keep a measure with respect to every thing in life; to reduce every passion to its proper bounds; not to be too much affected either with the pains or pleasures of this world; not to be eager in the pursuit, or extravagant in the use of any comfort it affords; but to be easy and indifferent as in a matter that doth not much concern them; "for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Now, this is a truth so rich and full of instruction, that any man almost might be eloquent on the subject; so clear and convincing that every man believes it; so useful and important, that every soul of man

is concerned, most deeply concerned, in it, that one would almost think it a waste of time and labour to discourse of it: but, alas! it is not every one that improves it; that sees and feels the full force and value of it. All that see this world see it to be a changeable and transitory thing, but few consider it to purpose. Like all general and plain truths, it meets with a vague and general persuasion. Needful therefore it is, from time to time, that we enter into that serious and particular discussion of it, from which we may hope, with the blessing of God, to reap benefit. And the method in which I propose, through divine assistance, to range our thoughts on this subject, is,

I. To consider what we are to understand by This World and the Fashion of it.

II. Shew that it is, in its nature, a fluctuating and transitory state of things.

III. Make some practical use of the subject.

I. By

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1. By this world we are to understand the visible, in opposition to the invisible state of existence. For into these two the whole world, or entire system of the creation, is resolved: the world that is unseen, and is in its nature eternal; and the world that is seen, and is in its constitution temporal. And by the attention that every man pays to the one or the other, his character is determined, and his lot is fixed. He is either carnally or spiritually minded, and his recompence accordingly, death or life, Rom. viii. 6. The character of a spiritual mind is, that he looks not to the things that are seen, which are temporal, but to the things that are not seen, which are eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18. The character of a carnal mind the reverse. He looks to the things that are seen. His affections are set upon things beneath, which the text calls this world. In both man is formed to exist. In this for a time; in the other for eternity; we exist in this state while we are in the body, and launch into eternity when we leave it. But there is such an infinite difference between our state now and then,
that,

that, in comparison, this may be well called, as the Apostle here terms it, a sort or fashion of a world, a figure of existence, like that of a man on a stage, or in a dream, where he exhibits but the form or figure of something else than he is. Not that we do not truly exist in this world; for upon the wild supposition that we have no being here, we could have no assurance of existence in another world. If life were a mere fancy, and all we see nothing but a dream, then all we believe could be no better. Here we are for certain, and there we shall be in a little. But as that may be strictly called a true world, where all is truth, and all everlasting; so that may be called the fashion of a world where there are manifold appearances foreign and contrary to truth, and where all is unsettled and unsatisfactory, as is the case with this world.

Here things look quite otherwise than they are. Mourning and poverty bear the face of misery—Mirth and riches appear to be happiness—Fame and preferment are filed honour—Slander and oppression are accounted disgrace—Hypocrisy has the face
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of devotion—Pride the mask of humility—Vanity the air of greatness—In short, truth is currently counterfeited and concealed under false colours; and, as the Psalmist sings, man spends his life in a vain show. Yet, in truth, they may be blessed that mourn—They may be happy that are poor—They may be truly honourable that are in disgrace in this world—They may be great and good who look mean.' And, on the contrary, they may be worthless, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked, who are accounted rich, and great, and famous among men.—Here things have no solid bottom—All moves in a perpetual tendency to another state, where false appearances shall for ever vanish away, and every thing appear as it really is—The whole frame of things here is continually hastening to a dissolution—continually shifting place and time.—This world is not the same world to day it was yesterday, though it appears to be the same. Every moment some persons and things are going out, and others coming in. Like a river, which, though it appear the same, yet is never precisely the same,

same, but a new succession of waters in the same place. On such accounts, it may be justly reckoned an appearance, a figure, or fashion of a world, in comparison of that state, where all is truth and appears as it is; where all is permanent and stable as eternity itself.—But I proceed,

II. To shew, by a more particular inquiry, that this world is in its nature a fluctuating and transitory state of things.—The fashion of this world passeth away.—To see this, let us,

I. Look upon time. Time is the element in which all creatures below are calculated to exist; in which they begin, go on, and end: and an element continually changing; always in motion, never resting, never returning. What can be more fluid and fleeting than time? The very nature of which consists in an uninterrupted succession of moment to moment, and with such contiguity or close coherence, that one moment can never be separated from another, nor by any art compelled to stop while

while another flies before it. But every one moment escapes away with another, like a ship under sail, or a bird on the wing; now beyond our grasp, and soon out of sight. Change is graven on the face of day and night, years, and seasons.—These are nothing else but visible variations of time, perpetually revolving from generation to generation; ever like, but never the same: so that the same day, the same night, the same year, the same season never was, nor will, nor can be seen a second time. In all lights, and in the strictest sense, time, which enters into the constitution of this world, passeth away.—That can hardly be said to pass away which goes off at present, yet returns again. But time once gone is for ever away. Persons and things at a distance may come back, but time will never come back with them. Whatever use we may make of it, time will neither wait till we are ready, nor return when we call. Though we had power with God, like Joshua, to make the sun stand still in the heavens; or, like Hezekiah, to force him backward, yet time would still be flying on without

without losing a pace in its way. While it is in our hands we may use or abuse it, but we cannot hold it no more than we can grasp the light in the hollow of our hands. Time would not be time if it passed not away.

2. The numberless creatures that exist in time, and compose this world, are continually changing with time, and passing away.

Look upward and downward, to right and left, before and behind, and see as many marks of mutability as we can discern creatures in the world; nay, as many changes in every creature as moments in its being, and parts and faculties in its constitution.

Behold that stupendous frame of the heavens! The sun, the moon, and the stars, which God ordained the regulators of time, and the lights of the world! Though they continue to this day from the beginning of time, and, by a law that cannot pass, will continue to the end of it, yet they are not creatures free from change. They are continually wasting their light and influence,

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and would, e're this time, have spent their very existence, if the hand that made them did not continually supply what time and motion continually wastes. Like fires, they behoved to extinguish and die away, unless they were continually fueled. They subsist by change; continually losing light and heat; continually receiving new recruits. They are like the ocean, that time would empty, if it received not back from the rains and rivers what it yielded in vapours to them.—And at last, when time shall end, they shall for ever pass away.—The sun shall be darkened—The moon shall be turned to blood—The heavens shall pass away with a great noise—The elements shall melt with fervent heat—The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, when the mighty angel shall lift up his hand, and swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever that time shall be no more.

If we look to the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, the beasts of the earth, reptiles, insects, and every living thing, the mutability of their state is graven upon their nature with indelible characters. They

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are destined every one to have their time, and turn of life, designed to pass away : and, because they cannot continue here, they are all made capable of continuing their kind by succession, race continually rising after race, and a sort of immortality is bestowed upon the kind to compensate the short duration of individuals : one generation continually exchanging existence with another.

Nor is change less visible in the vegetable world. Trees, herbs, plants, corns, grafs, flowers, and all the various fruits of the earth, by continual growth, make continual advances to decay, and form such a striking picture of mutability, that the Scripture frequently makes use of this figure to express the fragility of human life. Ps. ciii. 15, 16. And James, i. 10. And 1. Peter, i. 24. For the nature of an element enters into our very constitution. Man is but the creature of a day, destined to fulfil his term in the world like an hireling. Job. xiv. 12, 6. The state of our bodies—The temper of our minds—Our pains—Our pleasures—Our enjoyments are continually
changing

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changing and passing away. And in a little more time we shall all go to the place from whence we shall never return, and be for ever forgotten upon earth.

In short, if we could look through the visible creation from surface to center, no creature could be found in it but what is liable to change, and must pass away. The purest elements, least liable to corruption, and the hardest parts of matter, least capable of wasting, as they are changeable in their nature, shall at last be dissolved, and forever pass away. Ps. cii. 25, 26. And 2 Pet. iii. 10.

But it is needless to insist on the evidence of a truth that admits of ocular demonstration; what all may see, what none can be hardy enough to deny. Marshall all the creatures in this world by name and number, and through all their hosts, every one will confess they are passing away; and every individual man and woman in the world must say, as David did, 1 Kings, ii. 2. 'I go the way of all the earth.' Therefore, I proceed,

III. To the use we should make of this important and extensive truth. And hence we should learn,

1. To avoid all anxious care and immoderate concern about the things of this life. It is the common cry among men, Who will shew us any good? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be cloathed? Upon this, the generality spend their thoughts, their time, their strength: to this, bear all their schemes and projects, which they push at any expence. This ingrosses all their care, distracts their thought by day, and disturbs their rest by night. Their hearts, their heads, their hands, are busied about this world, however they may fare in another. And what could they do more, if their belly were their God, if the world were their portion, if this were to last forever, and the next world, like it, were to pass soon away? Indeed it is the unquestionable duty of every man to be industrious in his place and day in the world; to support life decently by all fair and honest means. But to suffer the cares of time to eat up our concerns
about

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about eternity, is against all the laws of duty and interest that ever God enacted for man. It is the will of God that every man do his own business quietly, and eat his own bread ; but we are quite out of our sphere when we vex ourselves to obtain what we cannot by lawful industry accomplish. Do what you can honestly, manage what you have frugally, and, if yet you want, leave God to provide, cast all your cares upon him, for he careth for you, 1 Peter, v. 7. and Phil. iv. 6. It belongs to him to see to those that cannot provide for themselves, and have none to help them. To this purpose, our blessed Lord gives full and express caution, Matt. vi. 25. ' Take ' no thought for your life,' that is, after you have done your duty to support it. But first seek the kingdom of God, the kingdom that can never be moved, that shall never pass away. It must be our sin and our condemnation to neglect that by caring too much for the things of this life.

And it is no less folly than sin to exceed in our care to purchase and secure things in their nature uncertain, and continually passing

passing away from us, and we from them. For what can anxiety do, when honest industry fails? It cannot add one inch to our estate, no more than a cubit to our stature. It cannot provide meat and cloathing for the body, much less peace and comfort to the mind. But supposing that a continual agitation and stretch of thought could lay up treasures in abundance, what is the fruit of all our care? We have only got what we can never promise to hold; abundance of things that are passing away. Besides, of all we can compass in the world, it is but little we can use, and but laying up to leave behind us, and lay it down again. For though we should secure abundance while we live, we must go naked out of the world when we die. 1 Tim. vi. 7. 'We brought nothing into this world, and 'it is certain we can carry nothing out.' Our wisdom, peace, and safety, therefore, lies in doing our duty, and leaving events to God, continually depending upon his kind providence in the use of our honest endeavours. If there is any thing needful and good for us that we cannot accomplish,
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the Lord will see to it. It is God's work to do for them who fear him, what they cannot do for themselves; and if we mind our's as we ought, be assured he will never forget his. In him, and him alone, can the soul return to its rest.

2. Hence we should learn to be moderate in the use of worldly enjoyments. If our hands have gotten much, we are not to waste it in riotous living. For this is abusing mind, body, and enjoyments, and is the fruit of an irregular and ill placed affection to things perishable in their nature and passing away. The Apostle here expressly instructs us so to use the things of this world as not to abuse them, for this very reason, that the fashion of this world passeth away. If our industry succeeds, and procures us abundance, we are not, therefore, to sit down idle and surfeit; for time is wasting, and wealth consuming: but we are still to labour, working with our hands, not only for the comfortable support of our own life, but for the good of others, and that we may have something to spare to them that are in want, as the Apostle exhorts,

horts; remembering the words of our blessed Lord, Act, xx. 35. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' All the advantage we can possibly reap from abundance lies in the cheerful and moderate use of it to ourselves, and the benefit we do unto others. And, therefore, said the wise observer of the things of this world, Eccles. iii. 12. 'I know no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life.'

3. We should learn to be contented with our lot in the world. The poorest man on earth will have his time of it as well as the richest; and whether a man be furnished with abundance, or supported from hand to mouth, it comes all to the same thing at last, since, in any state of life, the world is leaving him, and he the world. The rich have more than they need, which they are often tempted to abuse, and the poor have as much as may serve without being led into such a snare. They have enough while they live, and they shall need no more when they die; and they who have abundance to spare shall but leave it behind

them. This thought should, therefore, teach us something of the Apostle's temper, Phil. iv. 11, 12.

4. Here we have read a lesson that redeems poverty from contempt, and reduces riches to little. In this world, riches are in great esteem, while poverty is hated and despised, Prov. xiv. 20. But since the fashion of this world passeth away, why should the poor be despised for his want, or the rich esteemed merely for his abundance? If the one cannot get, the other cannot keep the world. The world will serve them both alike at the last. And, in truth, there can be no better reason for under-rating a poor man because he cannot lay hold on the world, than for laughing at a rich man because he must let it go. Neither can the one be justly respected, nor the other despised, merely for having or wanting the things of a world that is continually changing and flying away; which neither the art nor the industry of man can promise to purchase or secure. But though all the world besides should agree to esteem riches and despise poverty, Christians of all
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men should judge otherwise. For the Son of God himself, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. He hath sanctified poverty in his own person, that we might learn not to despise it in the persons of others, nor envy any for their riches. But think the world as they will, God respecteth not the persons but the characters of men. The righteous Judge of the whole earth will not favour the rich for his riches, neither will he despise the poor for his poverty.

5. Hence we may observe the sin and folly of those who trust to their riches for supporting their life, credit, and comfort in this world. I say in this world, for there is no man perhaps so gross in his imaginations as to believe that his riches will serve him in the next. They will not make such a God of their riches as to expect their salvation from them. But many are disposed to trust more to their wealth for their safety and support in this world, than to the providence of God, and think all will go well if they have money enough. They make gold their hope, and fine gold their confidence,

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confidence, Job, xxxi. 24. But a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, Luke, xii. 15. These are the words of our Saviour, which he illustrates by a very striking parable in the following verses.

And though both a man's life and abundance should continue, his wealth cannot secure his comfort. He may have great possessions with abundance of trouble. Ten thousand experiences daily evince it.—Any measure, with the blessing of God, makes a man rich, and all the wealth of the world without it is but a glittering curse. Therefore, saith the Apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, &c.

6. From this subject we should learn patience under afflictions. They cannot last in a world continually changing and passing away. A little time longer will either end or amend them. We may well expect a change of circumstances from a changeable fate; and, if we live as we ought,
death

death will put an end to all our sorrows at once and for ever, Rev. xxi. 4.

7. We should study to wean our affections from the things of time ; to leave the world as fast as it leaves us ; to be more and more indifferent about the pains or pleasures of it, the longer we live in it. The less this world has of our hearts, we shall part with the greater peace and pleasure when we leave it.

8. What we have heard serves to abate the love of life and the terrors of death, which naturally keep the mind of man under bondage. But when we reflect on the instability and uncertainty of all things below, what good reason can we have to indulge fond desires of life, or to tremble at the thoughts of a departure from such a vain and vexatious world? I know but one good reason why a Christian should desire to live long in this world, and that is, to do honour to God, and good to men. And if that be his principal care, the length of his life will rather be a trial of his patience than an object of his desire. It will better become his character and views, with sub-
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mission to the will of God, to desire to depart and be with Christ, than to remain in the body at a distance from the Lord, or to dread the thoughts of a transportation. It is a work worthy of a wise and good man to meditate a safe and honourable escape from such a restless and reeling state, rather than to grasp life with greediness, or view death with terror.

9. Here Christians may read consolation under the loss of Christian friends, relations, or acquaintances. On such occasions, some heathen nations mourned as having no hope, because they thought their being extinguished in death. Others mourned at the birth of their friends, because they had entered a world of woe, and rejoiced at their death, because that rescued them from the troubles and sorrows of it. The former mourned for their own sakes, for the loss they had sustained by the death of their friends; the latter rejoiced for the sake of their friends, because death, although an everlasting separation, delivered them from evil. Which of the two seemed more reasonable, let blind unguided nature decide.

cide. But the glorious Gospel of Christ hath taught us another and a better lesson, to part with our good friends in hopes of embracing them again with joy unspeakable and full of glory: and so to grieve our own loss, that we may be excited with greater diligence to provide for the time when our change shall come.

10. Let us bless God with thankful hearts that we have another and a better world to look for, a state that can never know either time or change. Let us study to conform our minds and manners to the glorious hope laid up for us in heaven—and cheerfully embrace all opportunities of entertaining communion with an unseen Saviour and an unseen world. Then we shall have no reason to fear the vicissitudes of life or the approaches of death. Then may we both lie down in peace and sleep, for the Lord will make us to dwell in safety. Amen.

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SERMON IX.

GOOD MEN STRANGERS UPON EARTH.

PSALM, cxix. 19.

*I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy
commandments from me.*

THE way of man is not in himself, said the Prophet Jeremiah. He can never travel safely through the dark and slippery paths of life whom God doth not guide—He watcheth in vain whom God doth not guard—He labours in vain whom God doth not help—His counsels must come to nought—His resolutions must prove vain—His endeavours fruitless—His promises false—His profession but a show—He is never less safe than when he is secure—He is never more blind than when he apprehends he doth see—Never more likely

likely to fall than when he thinks he doth stand—Never more foolish than when he believes he is wise.

He must consider well where he is, that would know what he needs, and solicit what he needs, that would hope to receive. Thus did the Psalmist. And as we are in that situation he once was in, his example can never be unfit for our imitation, nor his meditation unsuitable employment for our thoughts. In the words of my text we may observe,

I. His petition—Hide not thy commandments from me.

II. The argument enforcing it—I am a stranger in the earth.

Of these I propose, through divine assistance, to discourse in this order, and then conclude with some practical reflections.

I. Let us consider the petition. We cannot imagine that the Psalmist was ignorant of the divine precepts. This is utter-

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ly inconsistent with his well known character. He was a man well versed in the study of the Scriptures—He delighted to meditate in God's law—The statutes of the Lord were his song in the house of his pilgrimage—And, as far as the mere force of nature could go to attain the knowledge of God's commandments, we may well believe they could not be hid from him. He knew all that the capacity and application of man could learn from an express revelation of the divine will. God gave his statutes and judgments to Israel; and the Psalmist had the advantage not only of that revelation, but of a superior understanding, and a mind more solicitous about matters of this kind than others. The commandments of God, then, considered as an external revelation, are not what he means when he prays, "Hide not thy commandments from me."

Neither can we believe that he thought the commandments of God designedly dark and ambiguous like heathen oracles, intended to hide what they pretended to reveal. No. They are so plain that the bluntest

bluntest mind, with due attention, may easily read the reason, the wisdom, the equity, and importance of them. So far from judging them dark and impenetrable secrets, he stiles them, in another part of this Psalm, a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path. And another inspired writer characterizes the Scriptures, the sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as a light that shineth in a dark place; 2 Peter, i. 19.: the only guide under God, by which we can safely trace the paths of holiness, and shun the snares of vice. The commandments of God are plain and pure, written, as it were, with the beams of the sun.

So that the Psalmist does neither plead by this form of language that God would reveal a new system of precepts to him, which he had never before made known, nor that these already revealed should be expressed in plainer terms; but he prays for grace to improve them, and to apply them to practice, that he might see the proper use of his knowledge; for the internal illumination of God's Holy Spirit

Spirit to render the external revelation of the word profitable to his soul; for the practical saving knowledge of his duty in opposition to mere speculation. Now, God is said to hide this knowledge from us, when he doth not actually impart it; and the Psalmist here means, by negative expressions, the very same thing which he speaks in positive terms in the 18th verse, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" variegating his style on purpose to teach us, in the most emphatic and forcible manner, the absolute necessity of divine grace to instruct us in the saving knowledge of our duty.

This is the lesson which this petition conveys, and an appeal to experience and the word of God will satisfy us of the truth of the lesson.

1. Not always the men that best understand the laws of truth and duty best observe them. There is a wide difference between knowledge and the use of it; between the theory and the practice of any science; and it is more especially remarkable in this, by far the most important of any.

any. The knowledge and practice of God's will are things not merely separable in thought, that may be supposed different for argument's sake, that require a subtilty of understanding to divide them: but things separable in fact, the one being often found where the other is not. The difference is gross and palpable, obvious to the lowest capacity, wide as heaven and hell. For we read in the history of our blessed Saviour, that the devil himself was well acquainted with the Scriptures, and could quote them readily to his purpose. And our blessed teacher tells us expressly that there are servants who know their Lord's will, and do it not.

It is too evident for any to deny that men may sin against the light both of nature and of revelation; that they do not always act according to their knowledge. It was but little the heathens could know of God and their duty, but what they did know they did not improve—yea, they held the truth in unrighteousness. And now the state of the Christian world is a manifest proof that wickedness may abound where knowledge abounds. Though, indeed, the increase of knowledge

knowledge is far from being proportionable to the mighty advantages we enjoy by such a clear and full discovery of the divine will, yet where is the man that, on all occasions, performs as much of his duty as he knows? Who brings his practice up to the full extent of his knowledge? Is there any country, whether blessed with a revelation, or enjoying only the light of nature, in which man does not know his duty better than he performs it?

Now, however well a man may be read in the Scriptures, however learned in the language and meaning of the divine law, however much he may know of the commandments of God, if he know not how and when to suit them to practice, and conform his heart and behaviour thereto, they are hid from him; he knows not the use, the pleasure, and profit of observing them, without which the clearest and fullest notions of them are but empty speculation: he knows nothing yet as he ought to know, and needs as much to be taught the practice of his duty, as if he knew nothing of its nature. The understanding is not the only power in man that needs reparation

paration and support. He may have a learned head, who yet has a very vicious heart, and may understand his duty well, who never finds the way to perform it: And even good men, who are habitually acquainted with the practice of their duty, may be, upon particular occasions, strangely misled, or driven out of their course. Their prudence may desert them, prejudice may blind them, memory may fail them, passions may pervert them, temptations may subdue them, their hearts may misgive them, that they see not their duty till their error correct them, nor know what is right till they feel they are wrong. Nor is it seldom that wise men have their wisdom to seek from their folly, learn their duty from a sense of their miscarriages, and need repentance and remorse to amend them. Whoever but seriously considers himself and the world about him, may be easily convinced, that man, with all the knowledge he can acquire either from the light of nature or revelation, is not sufficient to direct his own steps, or to form his heart to the real love and steady practice of holiness, in which lies the life, the sense, and the soul
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of knowledge. Seeing then that man is insufficient for these things, it follows that without the grace of God he cannot be wise. Divine grace is absolutely needful to work in him and for him what he cannot for himself. The Lord must direct his path in the way of his commandments, otherwise he cannot go right: He must uphold his goings, or his footsteps will certainly slide: He must give wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding, as well as to them that are ignorant and quite out of the way: He must impart the skill of conducting our knowledge to execution, and add the internal aids of his Holy Spirit, to give fruit and efficacy to the external revelation of his holy word. Without this, there could be no sense, no consistency in the Psalmist's prayer, "Hide not thy commandments from me."

2. What experience teaches, the word of God confirms.—As the same visible object must appear in a very different form to an eye ill affected, and one rightly disposed, so the depraved spirit of man, and the Holy Spirit of God, must give a very different

ferent view of divine and spiritual things. And accordingly the Scripture assures us, that the influence and agency of the Divine Spirit is absolutely necessary to rectify and strengthen the soul for feeling the force of truth revealed, and to teach it to purpose and good effect. 1 Cor. ii. 12, 14. 'We have not
' received the spirit which is of the world,
' but the spirit which is of God, that we
' may know the things that are freely given
' to us of God. But the natural man re-
' ceiveth not the things of the Spirit of
' God; they are foolishness to him: nei-
' ther can he know them, because they are
' spiritually discerned.' Spiritual things
may be offered to his view; the oracles of
wisdom may sound in his ear, or swim in
his head, but never sink down into his
heart. The Lord must waken his ear to
hear, must open his eyes to see, and his
heart to receive the truth in the love of it,
otherwise he must remain blind to the
beauty, and deaf to the power of it. He is
such with respect to spiritual, as heathen
idols with regard to sensible things; hav-
ing eyes, but sees not; ears, but hears not;

hands and feet, but handles not, nor walks. The light shines to him as to the blind; he still walks in darkness, till the spirit of truth illuminate and rectify his vitiated powers. His knowledge, however extensive, is worse than vain, and will surely turn to gall and wormwood within him at the last. For this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and yet men loved darkness, Job, iii. 19. To those who reduce not their knowledge into practice, it would have been at least an alleviation of their sin and misery, if they had known less. Yet, alas! this a case but too common. Though the gospel of Christ conveys the clearest knowledge of God's will and man's duty that ever was, or will be dispensed to the world, yet is hid to many that have both opportunity to hear, and natural capacity to understand it. Many that are acquainted with the doctrines and precepts of Christianity never learn to obey them; though they hear and understand the gracious offers of a Saviour, they never see the day to accept them. For, saith he, John, vi. 44. 'No man can come unto me except

‘cept the Father which hath sent me draw
‘him.’ They must be all taught of God
that come unto him, not only by the teach-
ing of his word, but of his Spirit ; without
which, the external revelation is but a seal-
ed book, a dead letter, an empty sound, the
ministration of condemnation, the favour
of death and not of life. Men may know
God’s will, but without his grace will ne-
ver do it. The practical saving knowledge
of God’s commandments must ever be hid
where grace is withheld, John, xv. 5. Up-
on the best grounds, therefore, does the
Psalmist pray, hide not thy commandments
from me. And he that would know what
is that good and perfect will of God to sav-
ing purpose, and stand complete and perfect
in it to the end, through all the relations
and vicissitudes, errors and perplexities of
this dark and dangerous world, must, in
like manner, constantly plead for and de-
pend upon that Almighty grace which a-
lone is able to lead him safely and honour-
ably through. Let us consider,

II. The argument the Psalmist makes use of to enforce his petition; 'I am a stranger in the earth:' the fitness and propriety of which will appear, if we consider the several respects in which good men may be stiled *strangers* in the earth.

All mankind may, in some respects, be reputed strangers in the earth. This world is a troublesome, uncertain, and unsettled state to all, as that of strangers is: And a state of short continuance to all. What David said of himself and his people is equally true of all mankind. 1 Chronicles, xxix. 14. 'We are strangers and sojourners, as all our Fathers were, and there is none abiding.' But there are peculiar respects in which good men may be denominated such.

I. In respect of their heavenly extraction; they are natives and citizens of heaven. Though they are in this world, they are not of this world. They belong to another. From heaven they came, and thither they return. Indeed wicked men, and foes of God, and the angels that fell, may be all said to come from heaven, as all received

ceived their being and faculties from the Father of Spirits in heaven. But for their rebellion, their blood is tainted, their inheritance forfeited, and their persons doomed to eternal exile, never to see their native soil, or behold the face of God in mercy any more. But good men, though children of wrath by nature, even as others, are born of God the second time, that they may be fitted for his heavenly kingdom; and when the days of their pilgrimage are fulfilled, they shall be brought home to their native seat, and settled in their own country. Now, as they came from God, and are going to God, it is necessary that they be well acquainted with his commandments, and well furnished to execute the commission upon which he sent them to sojourn upon earth. For here they stand probation for a while, to try their fidelity to him in doing his work, and obeying his will, and how can they return with a satisfying account of their life and labours, if his commandments should be hid from them? How can they do the will of Him that sent them without special instruction from him? How
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can one that is sprung of heaven, and a candidate for immortality, live contentedly ignorant and inexpert in the laws, the customs, and manners of his own country? This well suits the sons of earth, who act like themselves when they never mind the work or will of heaven; but can never quadrate with the character of one who is a Son of God, a naturalized inhabitant of heaven. The consideration of his heavenly original, therefore, is a very fit and proper argument upon which to solicit his heavenly Father to teach him to do his will, and not to hide his commandments from him.

2. Good men are strangers upon earth in respect of their inheritance. The children of this world have their portion in the things of this life only. As they mind nothing better, they have nothing better to expect. This is all their settlement, vain, vague, and vexatious as it is. Here they live in their proper element. This flash of life is all their pleasure. Their days of joy and gladness are only here; and if they find not peace and pleasure in their own

own world; their all is lost when they leave it. Every thing dainty and goodly is departed from them, and they shall see it no more at all. And if their life was sweet unto them, their end must be a grievous mourning, a very bitter day. But the resting place of saints is not in this world; it remains, it waits them; their portion is settled in the land of the living, and when their term is come, their work goes with them, and their reward is before them. They are in this world like the children of Levi among their brethren; 'they had no inheritance; for the Lord was their inheritance.' Yet good men have their measure of earthly comforts as well as others. However, it is but an interim provision to serve them by the way, till they return to their native country. It is given for no other use, no other end; and if they have as much as will bring them to their graves in peace, they have enough, however small their allowance be. For death is the door by which they enter into the possession of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven
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for them ; being heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. And they may well put up with little now, who have so much to look for at last.

Now, as God is their God, their portion and inheritance, his will must be their law, his word must be their rule, his spirit their interpreter. They can have no other light, no other guide to lead them home, and land them in his presence : and if his commandments should be hid from them, they would stumble and fall to the wounding of their souls, and wander solitary, helpless, and forlorn in a foreign world. They must lose their way when their light is removed ; their hope is gone when their candle is put out. Therefore, does the Psalmist pray on another occasion, cxliii. 10. ' Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God : Thy spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness.' Where the petition is the same, and the reason the same as in the text, though in other words. As if he had said, the world is not my God ; my portion is not here ; I am but a stranger on earth ; thou art my God, therefore teach me

me to do thy will, hide not thy commandments from me ; let thy good Spirit direct and strengthen me to the faithful performance of them, and so lead me to the land of uprightness, where I shall never be in danger of transgressing any more.

3. Good men are strangers in the earth, in respect of their affections and desires. As their treasure is in heaven, their hearts are there. Their affections are set upon things above, not on things beneath ; and nothing can be wider of the world than a heavenly mind. No characters can be more unlike, nor tempers more strange, than these are to earthly minds. Their ends, their motives, their principles, their employments are contrary to one another. Earth-born, and earth-bred souls mind earthly things ; their hearts are set upon the profits, pleasures, and honours of this world. Their taste is formed, the maxims of their conduct are founded upon these, and the motives that impel them are drawn from the things they affect. Nothing will make an earthly mind to move, where nothing earthly is to be gained. And their passions keep

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pace with their purpose. They grudge, they fret, they fire, they grieve, they groan, they mourn and lament when they lose; they are pleased, they are comforted, they laugh, they dance, they sing and rejoice, when they gain the things of this world. Their thoughts and imaginations are ever brooding on the world. Their looks, their language, and behaviour favour high of the world. Their chosen companions are the men of this world. The very cast of their souls is conformed to this world. And though they may bestow a thought or a word upon God and divine things upon occasions, they are but acting out of character in this, and unlike to themselves; it is but a deviation from their stated course. For their true and general character is, that they mind earthly things. There is nothing they love and esteem so much; nothing they pursue so close: and, give them enough of this world, they would never wish a better. Hence our blessed Saviour files them the children of this world; as if the world had begotten them after its own image; as if their very souls were sprung of earth, and incorporated with dust; as if their earth-
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ly affections had converted this principle of immortality within them to gross and corruptible matter. These are the natives of earth—These are the citizens of this world—The only men to whom the world is no stranger, neither are they strangers to it, though, to their sorrow, their continuance in it must be short, and their enjoyments uncertain. But heavenly minds have a temper and turn quite foreign to the world. Their views, their principles, their motives, their passions, their employments, have a quite contrary stamp and tendency. What they have at heart above all things, is to shew forth the honour of his name who hath called them to glory and to virtue, and to enjoy his blissful presence in a better world ; without which heaven itself could be no heaven to them, Psalm, lxxiii. 25. As God is their end, so faith is their principle, 2 Cor. v. 7. Having, like Moses, an eye to the glorious recompence of the just, they are impelled by motives, drawn from the world that is unseen ; and their passions move as the state of their souls turns. When they feel peace and health,

health within, grace improving in their hearts, the fruits of it abounding in their lives, and the hope of glory shining more and more unto the perfect day, this is their consolation, their pleasure, their joy and delight, go the world as it will. And they can have no greater joy than to see their souls prosper. The sweet reflection adds new health to their souls and marrow to their bones. Then their souls are disposed, and all that is within them stirred up to magnify the Lord—Their spirits rejoice in God their Saviour. Then all their powers are in their proper tune—All the strings of love are braced to their sweetest key—And, O! the melting melody that is heard in the dwellings of the righteous when they feel their souls in health, and the light of God's countenance lifted up upon them. It moves the soul to the very center with delight, gives a taste of heaven to the heart, and descends like cooling water into the burning bowels of a thirsty soul. Then they feel life and sense, number and harmony, in the Psalmist's notes. Psalm, lxxiii.

4, 5. and xxxv. 10. 'Thus will I bless thee while I live.'

But, ah! what a sad reverse to every such person, when God hides his face, when he feels symptoms of decay in the divine life, when he is unhappily surprised or driven into the commission of sin, and sees that he has dishonoured, offended, provoked his God; there is no soundness in his flesh, because of God's anger, nor any rest in his bones because of his sin. He sighs, he grieves, he groans, as Ezekiel speaks, with the groanings of a deadly wounded man. He mourns in the bitterness of his soul. Abundance of corn and wine cannot alleviate his trouble. Though he should have the world at will, it could give him no peace. Nothing can calm the roaring disquiet of his heart till God restore him the joy of his salvation. In short, the profit or loss of a good man's soul is the principal source of his joy or sorrow. And as all his passions turn with the state of his soul, so his thoughts and imaginations, his looks, his language, his behaviour are habitually bending to heaven, and confessing him a pilgrim

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pilgrim upon earth, Heb. xi. 13, 16. As a man wrapt up in thought while he is in company, is said to be absent, so heavenly minds, though present on earth in person, are absent in spirit, their minds are estranged from this world; busied in corresponding with another, Phil. iii. 20.

Now, to a mind thus turned, thus exercised, there can be no peace, no pleasure but in keeping the commandments of his God. The love of God in his soul would never find a vent without this; he could have no way left to prove his affection, to testify that his love to his God and Redeemer is real and sincere, if his commandments were hid from him, John, xiv. 15. And as little evidence could he have of the special love of his God and Redeemer unto him, ver. 21. This would rob him of the chief pleasure of his life, and of the comfortable testimony of a good conscience at his death. It would damp his joy, and blast his hope, and leave the weary traveller hungry and hard bestead in an unfriendly world.—From what hath been said,

ending to heaven, and continuing him I.

1. Let us learn, as strangers upon earth, to keep a close correspondence with heaven, to live near to God, much in the exercise of prayer, under a lively sense of our own necessities, and with believing views of divine grace to direct and uphold us; otherwise, it will be no wonder if, instead of coming well to our journey's end, mischief befall us by the way. Every day of life brings new work and new needs, and so requires new supplies of grace, which we must daily and earnestly solicit if ever we expect to receive. For a promise of grace God never made to any soul that doth not ask it; and it is, indeed, rating the greatest blessings below the value of a trifle if we account them not worth the asking. It is no small mercy to have mercy and grace for the seeking, and it is not for nothing that the scripture hath so often and so peremptorily enjoined us—To pray always and not to faint—To pray without ceasing—To watch unto prayer with all perseverance.

2. Let us never satisfy ourselves with the knowledge without the practice of our duty.

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‘ If ye know these things,’ said our blessed Lord, ‘ happy are ye if ye do them,’ John, xiii. 17. But it must be very unhappy for us to know and not to do them. For to whom much is given, of them much will be required; and the servant that knew his Lord’s will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. He glories in his shame who boasts of his knowledge, but is unguarded in his practice. He may have a name to live, while he is but dead. He may think himself rich, increased with goods, standing in need of nothing, while he is truly miserable, wretched, poor, and blind, and naked. He who knoweth not this, with all his knowledge knows not himself: And he but knows every thing to his own condemnation, who knows every thing but himself.

3. We should meddle as little with the world as may be. Every one is bound quietly to do his own work and eat his own bread while he sojourns in it; but, to create business to ourselves that belongs not to us, and to go out of our own sphere to meddle officiously in the concerns of others,

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is the way to shake our souls off their center, and draw them into a snare, besides the hazard of losing time and travel by the way.

4. We should live indifferent to the pains and pleasures of this world. Why should creatures framed for eternity suffer themselves to be much affected with things changeable and changing, continually varying their form and passing away? If weeping endure for a night, joy may come in the morning—If joy last through the day, sorrow may return in the evening; but in a little time both we and all our joys and sorrows shall be buried at once, and utterly forgotten in the earth; and what good reason can we have much to mind them?

5. We should accustom our minds to look forward to our latter end. Nothing is more inconsistent with the character of a pilgrim than an unwillingness even to think of the command which his sovereign may soon send him, to return from a strange country. Whereas, frequent and serious thoughts of death will wear off its terrors, —will excite us to dispatch our work be-

fore the night comes upon us ; and, by the blessing of God upon our exertions, will secure us an honourable escape, and an easy transition from time to eternity.

6. Lastly, We should learn to be kind and hospitable to all mankind, as all are strangers in the earth in some respects ; and our common lot is a powerful inducement to offices of kindness. ‘ Do good to all men, ‘ says the Apostle, as ye have opportunity ; ‘ but especially to those that are of the household of faith.’ These are strangers of a peculiar kind, and knit by peculiar connections, and therefore especially bound to be kind and tender hearted one to another. The state of a stranger justly claims the kindness of all who profess themselves to be strangers ; and, while we are kind to all, it may be our lot to do a service to some, that may reflect the greatest honour and happiness upon us. Therefore does the Apostle exhort the Hebrews, xiii. 2. ‘ Be not ‘ forgetful to entertain strangers ; for thereby ‘ some have entertained angels unawares.’ And though we cannot hope to entertain angels here, we may entertain saints, and

so entertain Christ himself, infinitely greater than angels, Matth. xxv. 35. 'In as much as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me;' and 'he that giveth but a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ for his sake, shall not lose his reward.' Let us therefore mind where we are, and what we are, that we may learn to live in love and peace among ourselves. Let never Christians quarrel with Christians, or fall out by the way, seeing all are strangers in the earth, and all hope to meet together in heaven.

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S E R M O N X.

THE BLESSED HOPE.

TITUS, ii. 13.

Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

HERE the Apostle is instructing Titus, as a minister of the gospel, to exhort persons of all ranks under his charge, how to behave worthy of their profession as Christians, viz. soberly, righteously, and godly. And to enforce such exhortations, he suggests a variety of arguments which could not fail to have a powerful influence upon all sincere believers in Christ; drawn from the great end and design of all the saving grace of God, so clearly manifested in the gospel, which teacheth us to deny
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all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world—from that Blessed Hope—and from the time of its being revealed, the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour.

By an usual figure of speech, hope is here put to signify the thing hoped for, that is, eternal life; called, Coloss. i. 5. 'The hope which is laid up for us in heaven;' and here characterised by peculiar epithets, which serve at once to distinguish it from all other objects of hope, and to shew the mighty influence which the hope of such a glorious reward should have upon the heart and conversation of a Christian—A blessed hope—That blessed hope.—In connection with this, he immediately adds another most powerful consideration drawn from the time when that blessed hope shall be consummated—At the glorious appearing of the Great God, that is, the awful day when God shall come to judge the world in righteousness. But for the greater comfort and encouragement of Christians to live as becomes them, God in our nature comes

comes to judge us ; and therefore he adds, (and our Saviour Jesus Christ)—asserting the union of the divine and human natures in the person of our judge ; in virtue of which he is peculiarly fitted and qualified to judge men.—Christ Jesus, the Great God, and our Saviour.

Here then are two general topics from which the Apostle would persuade Christians to a holy and heavenly conversation, viz. the hope of a blessed reward, and in a blessed time. But to give these considerations their due influence upon our life, a particular disposition of mind is requisite and necessary, which the Apostle here expresseth by looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing.

The method that naturally offers in discoursing from these words is, to illustrate

I. The force and fitness of the argument drawn from the hope of a Christian.

II. That drawn from the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour.

III.

III. The temper and turn of mind fit and necessary to give these arguments their proper influence upon us.

IV. And then to conclude with some practical improvement.

I. Let us consider the first general head of argument that the Apostle has here marked out. It is taken from the hope of a Christian. He is not called to serve God for nought. Godliness is not an unprofitable service. The great Ruler and Judge of the universe hath established an inseparable connection between his honour and our happiness. And as he hath planted such a powerful spring of action as hope in our frame, he hath given it something to work upon, something worthy of our hope to keep it in life and action. It is not a heartless call nor a hopeless labour, when we are called to live soberly, righteously, godly. We are called to hope when we are called to work. And this is no small encouragement if we consider that we cannot profit our Maker by our righteousness, nor

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merit a reward at his hand. Although we should live perfectly sober, righteous, and godly, we must say as our Lord hath taught us in the parable, Luke, xvii. 10. 'We are but unprofitable servants, we have but done what was our duty to do.' The ground of our hope lies not in our merit, but in God's mercy; the reward for which we are encouraged to look is not of debt, but of grace. And supposing it a very small and inconsiderable thing, yet, upon all the principles of reason, it is encouragement enough to do what otherwise we are indispensably bound and obliged to do. But the abundant grace of our God in Christ Jesus hath invited us to expect an abundant reward; and whatever force there is in hope to move men to action, is all bent to push them on to well-doing, by a just view of that reward which God hath promised. If hope can stimulate men to vigour and vigilance in any case, it wants not something to look for in the course of well-doing and on a better foundation than can be attained respecting any comfort in life. Life is all a venture to us, we can neither promise

mise to obtain what we want, nor to hold what we have. Probability is all the foundation we can have for hope, with respect to the things of this world—But the hope of a Christian rests upon a sure, an infallible foundation. It is not possible that he who lives as becometh the Gospel of Christ should miss a reward. For it is promised to such, and he is faithful who hath promised, who also will do it. As God is true, he who labours in the faith of this promise, shall not labour in vain.

Is not this, then, a good argument, a forcible motive, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, that the grace of God hath provided and assured a reward to our labour, and a reward not only unmerited, but so great, so glorious, that even the boundless power of imagination cannot grasp it. It is the hope of reward that effectually persuades men to work in this world; it is this that sets all the world a-going, and keeps it continually in action—every one looking for his gain from his quarter. This is the end of all the commerce, of all the arts and occupations of life, which men push with

all their strength and skill, even upon a mere uncertainty, and under manifold disappointments. They repeat, they multiply their efforts, they change their purposes, they renew their toil, and form their schemes into a thousand shapes, all from the hope of a recompense, which yet they cannot be sure to find. But we run no risk of losing the reward of our labour, if we labour in the Lord. Supposing the reward nothing better than this world can afford, as much as certainty exceeds probability, so much more powerful is the motive from the reward that God hath promised.

When we consider the nature of that reward, the argument receives new light and force. It is indeed something greater, infinitely greater, than this world can afford. This the Apostle intimates by calling it a blessed hope, because it comprehends all that can render the man, soul, and body completely blessed through all eternity. Although a man had more in this world than he can hope for, though he had the whole world in actual possession, that could not
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make him happy. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. He may hope for much, receive no less, and yet no blessing.—The richest man may be the most miserable. Or if he have any true enjoyment of his possessions in this world, it must be founded in the hopes of another. I say, true enjoyment; for whatever fond ideas we may foster of power, wealth, and pleasure in this world, that can never be justly stiled true enjoyment that hangs in perpetual suspense from ten thousand accidents which we can neither foresee nor prevent, and is founded upon things that all must confess perishable in their nature, that perish in the using, and must utterly perish at last, sending us away as naked out of the world as we came into it. If therefore we have any solid enjoyment while we are here, it must flow, not from the perishing things we have in hand, but the glorious things we have in hope. It is this alone that can give the soul peace and contentment under all the troubles of life, and terrors of death, and bless the whole man with
perfect

perfect and ever-during felicity hereafter. Upon these accounts it is here called a blessed hope, and, with greater emphasis still, that blessed hope; because no hope that the mind of man possibly entertains can equal this, much less exceed it.

(1.) I say, the hope of that reward which God hath promised to them who live godly in Christ Jesus, can give the soul peace and contentment under all the troubles of life. For this promises a happy end to them all at last. Here, indeed, is the place and time of Jacob's trouble. But however little rest there may be for the people of God in this world, it is enough to comfort them, that there remains a rest for them in another. They may well bear hardships with patience for a little time, who look for rest through eternity, and weather out a storm with heart and good will, who are sure of a safe harbour. Through all the laborious scenes of life we see that the hope of rest makes labour lightsome; and it is no wonder if a better hope have a like effect; if it cheer the mind in the midst of tribulations; if it secure a fund of joy here

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to the man whom it writes among the blessed who die in the Lord, who rest from their labours while their works do follow them. Besides, that living soberly, righteously, and godly is the best receipt for living happily, even in this present world. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely;" Prov. xx. 9. His integrity will preserve him, and prove his defence even with men. He must be a bad man indeed that will trouble one who makes it his principal care to keep a conscience void of offence both to God and man, and to do whatsoever things are just, pure, honourable, virtuous, and praise worthy. Therefore saith the Apostle, 1 Pet. iii. 13. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" But if men should trouble such, they have no reason to be uneasy, but good reason to comfort themselves in the Lord, when others vex them. For he is a buckler to them who walk uprightly; Prov. ii. 7. They have no reason to be afraid who have God on their side; Psal. iii. 6. and cxviii. 6. No matter though men curse, if God bless; though men

men hate, when he loves.—The event must always prove honourable and advantageous. However it may please him in his holy Providence, to order things present concerning such, yet there is a day coming when he will give rest to his saints, and recompense tribulation to his adversaries. He will make all things, prosperous or adverse here, to work together for the good of those who love him. As the dark colours in a picture taken alone can only sully the canvas, but, being judiciously blended by the skill of an artist, swell the piece to life and likeness, so the wisdom of God tempers cross and pleasing providences in the lot of his people, to work them up to his own likeness, and inspire them with a divine life, that they may be meet for the glorious inheritance of the saints in light. It is sufficient consolation for them to know that God, their father and friend in Christ Jesus, will direct their light and short afflictions so as to work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 2 Cor. iv. 17. They have nothing to fear, who have so much to hope, and may well

well live calm and contented within, though environed with troubles without. Who then that regards his own peace and safety in life, and his better hopes beyond it, can deny the force and fitness of this argument to persuade him to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? Think but what a changeable world we are in, how various, sudden, severe, the troubles of this life are, and let the heart which knoweth its own bitterness say, if that be not a blessed hope that can give peace and safety in such a vexatious state? If this be not a powerful incentive to holiness which brings such comfort and relief to the soul?

(2.) This blessed hope can fortify the soul against the terrors of death. Death is common to all men, good and bad. As the wise man dieth, so doth the fool. But wide is the difference of their state, and well seen when death appears. For the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death; Prov. xiv. 32.; the hope of a better world that can welcome death as the messenger of God sent to lead him directly to Heaven;

a hope that can make him desirous to depart and be with Christ: A blessed hope, indeed, that can disarm the king of terrors! And a blessed soul that possesseth it! Hear how triumphantly it sings in the pleasant voice of the sweet singer of Israel. Psalms, xxiii. 4. 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, for thou art with me.' In such a soul, the peace, the pleasure of this blessed hope, when death appears, is better felt than can be expressed. What words can convey a more lively idea of it than these of the blessed Apostle, 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8. He had been longing to depart, constantly looking for the blessed hope of being with Christ; and, when he saw the day of his dissolution near, he congratulates the approach of it. 'Now,' said he, 'I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand.' In like manner will the same blessed hope work in all who believe and act as he did. When physicians are of no value, when friends can give no help, when sighs and groans, and tears and prayers cannot avail to retain the departing spirit

spirit in the day of death, the lively view of this blessed reward can send the soul away in peace, rejoicing in the hopes of the glory of God. And, Oh! what a blessing this must be in such a dismal hour! If it hath any power to support the soul under the troubles of life, sure it must be so much the sweeter that it comes in the time of greatest need. The worst man upon earth would then give all the world, if he had it, for a grain of this hope. For however little men may mind death, that will not forget to tell them at last what they have to expect. And, if we but think what horrors must shake a hopeless soul at the hour of death, we may conceive what an unspeakable blessing it must be to have the hope of salvation for our support. A graceless soul brought to the very brink of the grave, black with guilt, torn with remorse, racked with despair, forced to go, terrified to venture, death behind, hell before, starting, staring, trembling, tossing round and round for hope and help, but neither hope nor help from God or man, not a comforter to speak a soothing word in this

time of trouble! What a woful case must this be! And what a blessed hope that can deliver from such a dreadful state? Such is the hope of eternal life which God hath promised to those who live soberly, righteously, and godly in Christ Jesus. And who that has any sincere desire of peace in life, or comfort in death, but must acknowledge this blessed hope a proper and powerful inducement so to live? But,

3. As the hope of this blessed reward can give the soul peace amidst the troubles of life, and the terrors of death, so the receipt of it will bless the whole man, soul and body, with perfect and everlasting happiness hereafter. For the reward for which a Christian is called to look is not, like the enjoyments of this world, an uncertain or unsatisfying thing; it is an infinitely better and more enduring substance. Nor are we left merely to conjecture as to the nature, quality, quantity, or duration of it, though, in all respects, it exceeds our comprehension. It is the best, the greatest blessing that a creature can enjoy, and such as cannot leave a wish behind it. It comprehends

hends all the promises that ever God made to man; and, therefore, is emphatically stiled in scripture *the promise*, because all other promises center in it; and it is expressed in terms that denote the highest possible perfection, and the longest possible duration. This is the promise that he hath given us, saith the Apostle John, 1 Epistle, ii. 25. God hath given us many great and precious promises, but this is the sum and perfection of them all. And what is it? Even eternal life.

1. It is called life. And what sort of life? Not a painful existence, such as our life here, which yet is the greatest blessing we possess in this world; for, without life, we are not capable of any enjoyment whatever. But this is life to perfection—Free from all pain—Full of all enjoyment. The Spirit saith, that life in that blessed state is free from all pain, imperfection and defect. Rev. xiv. 13. ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.’ And Rev. xxi. 4. ‘God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be

‘ be no more death, neither sorrow, nor
‘ crying, neither shall there be any more
‘ pain : for the former things are passed
‘ away.’ And who would not reckon it a
mighty blessing to have absolute security
against all pain and sorrow, and still more
to be freed from all fear of death ? Yet all
this is but a part, and the least part of that
blessed hope which God hath given. Who
would not fly pain ? Who would not shun
death if he could ? Whatever force, therefore,
there may be in the pains of life, or fears of
death, to persuade men to avoid them, is
all here with advantage to excite them to
live soberly, righteously, and godly. But
this blessed hope consists not merely in a
freedom from evil of every kind, but in
the actual enjoyment of all good, that is,
in the enjoyment of God, in whose pre-
sence is fullness of joy, and at whose right
hand are rivers of pleasure. In his pre-
sence nothing can be wanting to heighten
happiness to perfection, either in our en-
joyments, or in our powers, whether of
body or mind ; not in our enjoyments,
for there God is all in all ; not in the
powers

powers of our body; for though flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, yet the body shall be raised, refined, and fitted for immortality. 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44. 'It is sown in corruption, it is raised in corruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.' And to the same purpose, Phil. iii. 21. 'Christ shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body.' Nor will there be any defect in the powers of our mind, for the understanding shall be all light, the heart all love, and the whole soul as like Christ as it can be; and that is infinitely more than we can conceive, while our souls are pent up in these houses of clay. 1 John, iii. 2. 'Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.' And as we shall be like him in nature and in state, so also in the continuance thereof; for,

2. The reward that God hath promised is called eternal life ; endless and uninterrupted. That life is neither liable to change nor dissolution, but is in all respects made perfect at once, and for ever. O the blessed, the glorious hope that God hath laid up for them that fear him ! The eye hath not seen, the ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive it. If this will not move us to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in vain we look for a better argument, for a better hope. God himself hath no greater promise to make ; creatures can have no greater happiness to receive. And either there can be no fitness in any argument to persuade, or this hath all the force and fitness that argument can have. He that is deaf to the hope of eternal life, may shut up his ears and his heart against every other consideration. If hope can have any power on the human mind, here is enough to provoke it to emulation ; to waken all its energy and vigour to run for the glorious prize. If this be not worth looking and labouring for, nothing can deserve our regard. And
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after this, they must be supposed to live like them who have no hope, who do not learn to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Such a blessed hope, if we understand it, has charms enough to engage our most serious attention, and rouse the most dull and drowsy powers to action; and we cannot suppose any man insensible of its force but him who doth not believe it. But whether we believe it or not, God abideth faithful, and cannot deny himself; and we may as well expect to blot the sun out of heaven by winking with our eyes, as to frustrate the promise of God by our infidelity. Thus we see the Apostle's argument perfectly well fitted and forcible to his purpose.

From what hath been said upon the first head, we may discover the great sin and folly of covetousness, or an immoderate affection to the things of this world. Were men to remain here always, they might care, and strive, and fight for the world as they do. But certain it is, there is none abiding for man upon earth. Or, had we nothing better to look for, a worldly mind
might

might find an excuse. But now there is a blessed hope beyond the grave, a better and a more enduring substance, something better worthy of our love, our labour, and our care; and to neglect this for the sake of the perishing enjoyments of time, to be constantly grovelling upon earth, while heaven is in view, is to make the curse of the serpent our choice: Gen. iii. 14. 'Up-
' on thy belly shalt thou creep, and dust
' shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.'
The constant practice of men, with regard to their concerns in this life, is a standing condemnation of their folly in this matter. For who will grudge to part with a farthing when it can procure him a pound? Who will be eager about a trifle, when he has matters of the greatest moment on hand? Who will drudge in the meanest office, when he may be advanced to the greatest honour? What a fool would the world think him that would spend his time and thought in gathering stones, after showing him where to find silver and gold in abundance? No less foolish must he be who sets his affections upon the untenable
possessions

possessions of this earth, when he is invited, encouraged, directed to seek and find treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. Now, the folly of this is hardly believed, but at last it will be seen, when he comes to leave this world with insatiable desires, and an empty soul. For as we brought nothing into this world, it is certain we can carry nothing hence; naked we came, and naked we must go. And who knows how soon? God only can tell. Fool he is with a witness, as our Lord expressly calls him, Luke, xii. 16, 21, who seeks treasures in this world, but lays up nothing for the next. It is far less surprising if heathens seek after these things, as our Lord speaks, Matt. vi. 32. But for professed Christians, who tell all around them that they are looking for another world, yet drench their souls in the love and care of this, what can be devised to excuse the folly, to extenuate the crime? Heathens must rise up in judgment to condemn them. But now let us proceed to the *second*

General head, which the Apostle here hints to enforce his exhortation, viz. the time when this blessed reward shall be conferred.

Though the souls of believers are admitted into the presence of God immediately at their death, yet this is not all that God has given them to look for. There is a time fixed when soul and body shall be rejoined, and the whole man solemnly and publicly entered upon the possession of eternal life: That is the *great day*, when our Great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, shall appear. And, if we consider the design and manner of this appearance, we shall see abundant reason to live soberly, righteously, and godly in expectation of it.

1. The design of it is to judge the world in righteousness, to call every man to account for his conduct in life, and render to every one according to his works. Then is the time that shall fix the lot of every soul to everlasting happiness or endless wo. Acts, xvii. 31. The day in which we shall all appear at the judgment seat of Christ, to receive every one according to that

that he hath done in the body. 2 Cor. v. 10. A day of joy unspeakable and full of glory to the penitent, and as full of terror to impenitent souls. And while there remains a spark of regard to God, or the salvation of our souls, this consideration cannot fail to stir up some degree of solicitude to provide for such an awful event. This is the great argument that our Lord and his Apostles insist on to persuade us to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Luke, xii. 35, 36. and xxi. 34. and 1 Peter, i. 13. and 2 Peter, iii. 14. Then the godly shall receive the glorious reward of eternal life with glorious advantages; as we shall see more particularly if we consider,

2. The manner of that appearance, which is here expressed by a peculiar epithet, serving to distinguish it from all other appearances, particularly from his first appearance in our nature. That was, as to all external circumstances, mean and low. He was then in his state of humiliation; he veiled his glory for our sakes, and made himself of no reputation; so that it was thought no honour in this world to be a friend or disciple

ple of his ; on the contrary, it was deemed a reproach, because himself was despised and rejected of men for his mean appearance. But this second appearance shall be glorious, both with respect to the Judge himself, and the circumstances of his appearance. And, if this can add to the honour of that reward which will confer on them that love him, it comes in a good time, in a blessed day.

(1.) With regard to the Judge himself ; we are assured that he shall be seen in all his glory that day. Matt. xvi. 27. He shall appear with that glory which is peculiar to God, which no creature can assume ; with such distinctive characters of deity, that every eye shall see him and know him to be God. What that glory is, we cannot comprehend ; but of this we are certain, that it must be the perfection of all visible glory. Great is the glory of the heavens, great the glory of the angels ; but the heavens are not clean, the angels are not pure, compared with the glory of God, in the person of our Judge and Redeemer, when he comes in the glory of his Father,

a glory incommunicable to any created excellence whatsoever. A sample of his glory was seen at Mount Sinai—in the tabernacle and temple at Jerusalem—in vision by Isaiah—Ezekiel—Daniel—John—at the transfiguration by his three disciples, Peter, James, and John—by Paul at his conversion.—But then he shall appear in the fulness of his glory, such as was never seen by mortal man before. Hence he is represented as a bridegroom adorned with all the honours that the treasures of Heaven can furnish, and that great day is called his marriage day; Rev. xix. 7.

Now, to receive a token of his love at any time must be a singular honour, but much more on such a day. Then, to be admitted into his presence, near to his person, to hear a blessing from his lips, and receive the reward from his own hands, must add unspeakable value and dignity to it. On days of public appearance, kings and great men will not condescend even to speak to some to whom they can be kind and affable in private, counting it a diminution of their dignity, and too great an honour for such

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on such an occasion. Such a time gives value to a kind and respectful look. How much, then, must it heighten the glory of a believer's reward, to receive it from the King of kings, and on that blessed day when he appears in all his glory?

(2.) The retinue of the Judge will be glorious, and proportioned to the glory of his person. 'Behold, he cometh with ten thousand of his saints;' Jude, verse 14. All the armies of Heaven in dread array; all the celestial powers, principalities, thrones, and dominions, shall wait upon him to witness the honour he will do his saints that day, and shout with joyful noise in testimony of their approbation. These glorious ministers of his shall echo back the blissful sentence with one heart and voice, and make the Courts of Heaven ring the joyful sound, 'Well done good and faithful servants.' Then many a man that was hardly noticed upon earth, nay, that was despised, abused, and persecuted, shall be observed, approved, and loudly commended by the Great God and Saviour himself and all his mighty Princes of Heaven.

Heaven. All men, in all nations and ages of the world, from the first made to the last born, shall stand at the judgment seat of Christ that day. The congregation shall be universal. Not one intelligent creature shall be amissing. All Heaven, Earth, and Hell, shall rise at the awful summons at once, to behold the honour that the glorious Judge shall confer upon them that live godly. It shall be done before many witnesses, in the most public manner possible. There never was, never will be, a day in which the reward can be bestowed so much to our honour and advantage. If it adds to the honour of a good subject, that the reward of his service is bestowed by his prince in person in the most public and solemn manner, before the most illustrious assembly, how much will it raise the honour of good men to be then and thus rewarded by the Great God and Saviour? To every soul endued with a sense of true honour, this cannot fail to be a most powerful incentive to well doing.

The public approbation, or a good name among our fellow creatures, is the desire of
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all men; and the love of fame is one of the most powerful principles in our nature. The history of all nations and ages can furnish numberless examples of this, and show the noble achievements, the worthy deeds it has wrought. And sure, if there be any force in fame, any impulse in a sense of honour, such a glorious, such a public testimony in our favour at the great day, must be a powerful inducement to do well. He must be lost to all sense of character that cannot be moved to live as he ought, with the view, with the offer of such a blessed hope, and in such a glorious day.

But true it is, alas! that many to whom this glorious hope is revealed and offered, continue, notwithstanding, in their ungodliness and worldly lusts, as if they had nothing better to hope, nothing worse to fear beyond this world. The reason is, that they want that temper and turn of mind which is necessary to give these arguments their proper influence upon them.

III. This temper and turn of mind I now proceed to explain, by endeavouring to illustrate

illustrate the expression used by the Apostle,
'Looking for that blessed hope.'

No organ of the body can more quickly and certainly tell how the soul is employed, in what it delights, and where it would be, than the eye. It is the glass in which we read the features of the mind, the secret movements of passion and affection in the heart. And the cast of the eye will often discover more of a man's meaning than the tongue can or dare utter; and give a stronger accent to his thoughts than his lips to his words.

Hence, looking is in Scripture common style to express the principles and dispositions of the mind, with respect to things divine and heavenly: And with regard to the blessed hope and glorious appearing here mentioned, it means,

1. A firm persuasion of the truth and reality of those things. If a man is not convinced and persuaded that there is such a thing as this blessed hope, that there will be such a glorious appearing, he can never be supposed to look for them. However great the reward of well-doing be, however

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glorious the appearing of the great God to confer it, the arguments drawn from thence can never have any influence upon us, if we believe not the certainty of these things. Or if our faith be weak or wavering, the impression of these arguments must be proportionally faint upon our minds, and our conversation must halt between sin and duty. But if our minds are rooted in the faith of eternal life and a future judgment, then the argument will take hold of our hearts, and work powerfully upon us. This is the constant effect of faith with regard to every distant object of human affection. Because the husbandman believes he shall reap, therefore he sows and labours; because the workman believes he shall have his wages, therefore he works; because the trader believes he shall have profit by his traffic, therefore he ventures his commodities to countries he never saw: and so through all the various occupations of life. But he who believes not that he shall have a reward, will never be persuaded to work. So in this case, if we are as firm in the faith of eternal life, and of a day of retribution in another world,

world, as we are of receiving a reward of our labour in this, we will struggle as earnestly for our souls as others for their bread, and feel the force of every argument to persuade us to vigour and diligence in the work of our salvation. But if we believe not, the word preached cannot profit; it is but preaching to the deaf or the dead, to handle the best arguments to the best purpose. Unbelief effectually destroys the force of all arguments to live for another world. He who doth not believe it, looks not for it; and he who looks not for it, will never be persuaded to live or labour to obtain it. No wonder if they are ungodly, and slaves to worldly lusts, who look not for a future reckoning.

2. Looking for the blessed reward, signifies a lively hope of obtaining it, which, on that very account, is called the blessed hope. For what the mind expects, the eyes are ever looking for till it come; and he only who hath the hope of salvation can be said to look for it; he only can feel the power of arguments drawn from it. And in proportion to the vigour and
vivacity

vivacity of our hope will our efforts to obtain it be vigorous. A lively hope will make an attentive eye, and waken all our powers to vigilance and vigour. If hope is low, attention will sink, and all our powers of action turn languid and sickly. What men never expect, they will never look for, never attempt to obtain. They may hope, indeed, for what they can never find, and labour hard for very vanity; this is folly. Or they may expect to receive what they labour not to obtain; this is presumption. But what they never hope for, they will never seek after, never strive to obtain. Despair enervates all industry, and breaks the edge of every argument to action. Minds that can entertain no hope of eternal life, can feel no force in the best reasons that can be offered to seek after it. All we can preach, all they can hear, is nothing to the purpose, while they continue without hope. They have neither eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor heart to strive for the reward they never expect. Till they learn to conceive the blessed hope of immortality, they will never learn to be sober,

ber, righteous, and godly ; they will never be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead. But the lively hope of this gives life and spring to all our powers, sense and substance to every argument. And he who hath this hope in Christ will thereby be persuaded to purify himself, even as Christ is pure. 1 John, iii. 3.

3. Looking here denotes an earnest longing, an ardency of desire to obtain the blessed hope, and see the blessed day when Christ shall appear. For, in proportion to the value we put upon any thing we hope for, will the desire after it be strong and vehement. And as eternal life is the most valuable reward a creature can expect, and the day of Christ's appearance the most glorious day, so the desire of those who truly believe and hope for these things must be warm and keen. And the keenness of desire discovers itself in nothing more than in the look of the eye. It gives an eager, a greedy cast, a determined, peremptory, and unsatisfied look till we obtain. The fervency of desire within transfuses a kind of vehemence and violence to the eye without,

out, that tells the temper of the mind, and with such ease, that the mind can hardly forbid the eye to discover it. So that looking is here language for longing, such as that which Hezekiah expressed by the same figure, Isaiah, xxxviii. 14. ' Mine eyes fail ' with looking upward.' And longing for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing, is a proper disposition of heart to give influence to the arguments drawn from thence. The vigour of our hope, and the vehemence of our desire, will serve like whip and spur to drive us on in the way to obtain the glorious prize. But if we are cold and indifferent to this, no wonder if we take another course of life; if we are drawn aside, and enticed by other objects, no wonder that we do not feel the force of arguments to live to a purpose for which we are little concerned. But to a man who looks and longs to obtain it, speak of his blessed hope, and his soul is on fire; let him see his reward, set his joys before him, and he will run his race with patience, with pleasure. He will do, he will suffer any thing that tends to gratify the desire of his soul.

soul. He will feel the power of every argument, every advice, every exhortation that can help him on to the enjoyment of his hope. Persuade him to live soberly, righteously, and godly, he will hear and observe instruction with pleasure; he will feel the force of every consideration that touches the hope of his soul. Attempt to persuade him to the contrary, and, instead of slackening his diligence, you but add indignation to his zeal. For where hope is strong, and desire keen, they gather strength by opposition, and double vehemence to subdue it. Without this longing for immortality, we can never act with that seriousness and consistency, that firmness and fortitude, that vigour and agility, which an object so great and glorious demands. Lazy wishes, languid efforts, feeble desires, are most unworthy of the blessed hope of a Christian. It is not a little thing he looks for, or such as may excuse indifference or neglect. It is enough to brace every nerve, to bend every joint, to stretch every power to reach it, and, if he understands it aright, he cannot be supposed

supposed to look without longing. Rev. xxii. 20.

4. Looking for the blessed hope means a constant and habitual attention to this as the chief end and object we ought to have in view. This the construction of the language here leads us plainly to conceive. The grace of God, saith the Apostle, teacheth us to live soberly, righteously, and godly ; looking, that is to live looking for the blessed hope, in opposition to a superficial, transient, and occasional look. It is not a slight glance, an accidental turning of the eye, or a look now and then that he means, but a stated and ordinary fixing of the eye upon the object. Our looking for this is such as should run through our whole life. An occasional look may have an occasional influence ; and it would be strange indeed, if a serious attention to this blessed hope, and that awful day at particular times, should not have some force to bring even wicked men to a sober mind, and waken resolutions to a better life. But alas, their goodness, like the morning cloud, and the early dew, goeth away. When the occasion

sion is over that wakened their attention, their sobriety is gone. However, this serves to shew the necessity of keeping our attention habitually fixed upon that blessed hope and glorious appearing, in order to maintain a regular and stated influence upon our life and conversation. If we live looking to these important objects, we shall learn to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Not that it is either possible or necessary to give a direct and strict attention to eternal life and judgment every moment of our lives. For, as a man may labour industriously as he ought for the meat that perisheth, though he be not always thinking of it, so may he for that which endureth to everlasting life. Or as a traveller may be continually advancing on his way, though he be not every moment meditating upon the end of his journey, so may saints be making daily progress to heaven, though it be not always directly in their thoughts. He is a worldly minded man whose thoughts and desires are chiefly and commonly set upon the things of the world, though at some times he think and talk of

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better things. He is a heavenly minded man whose attention is principally and ordinarily fixed upon the things of another life, though he speak and think of other matters upon occasions. It is the prevailing temper and disposition of the mind that defines the character, and the ordinary cast of the eye that tells what the mind would be at. By this is the character of Moses described, Heb. xi. 26. He had respect, or looked at the recompence of reward. And by this the Apostle defines the character of every true Christian. 2 Cor. iv. 18. 'We look at the things that are not seen.' This is the end that a Christian ought to have most at heart, the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul. This is the one thing needful; and as he professes to have but a single aim, he should have but a single eye, should attend to this without distraction with all possible firmness and constancy of mind, through all the various periods and passages of life; like the racer, who through all the various turnings and windings of his course, diverts not his eye from the goal he would reach. For it is this that at once directs and animates his motions,

motions. The fight inspires him with ardour, obliges him to stretch and drive on at full career till he gain the prize. He may glance at other things in his way, but there is nothing he minds but this, nothing else to which he can be properly said to look. For the sake of this, he overlooks all before him, and forgets all behind. In like manner should we look to the blessed hope, and the fight will have a like effect; as we see it exemplified in the character of the Apostle, Phil. iii. 13. 14. This will give power and efficacy to every argument to pursue that course of life in which we may expect to find it. But without a fixed and habitual attention of mind to the glorious prize, the most powerful consideration will at most but raise some transient flush of heat in the heart, which cools again as quickly as it kindled.

Now, from what has been said, we may discern the true reason why men live so unsoberly, unrighteously, and ungodly. They look not for the blessed hope and glorious appearing. They have something else at heart,

heart, some other thing in their eye. They look at the things that are seen, not at the things that are not seen. These being at a distance, they little think of, little mind. But the things of this life being continually before them, continually attract their attention and regard. If they believe the things of another, their faith deserves not the name; it is but a faint and fluctuating opinion. Or, if they will call it faith, it is nothing to the purpose while they listen chiefly to the allurements of sense. If men were as firmly persuaded of the truth of another life as they are of this, or as they should be, they would live for that, and not for this. Their faith would lead their thoughts, and keep their hearts in heaven. It would follow the voice of the Lamb, let the world call never so loud to lead them astray. It would readily receive whatever tends to confirm their blessed hope. For it needs little to set the heart a-going the way it would be. But weak or wavering apprehensions of things unseen can have no force to subdue the heart, and draw off our attention from the things that are seen.

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They may at times make some faint attempts, but leave the man still to go on in the way of his heart and in the sight of his eyes. It is not a general unsettled notion of a future state that will amount to a true faith, but a firm, a lively, and lasting persuasion. When we see the things that are not sensible, as if they were before our eyes, keep them constantly in view, and continually at heart, these things will have like influence upon them who thus believe, as sense upon them who see. Each lives for the world he looks at, correspondently to the prevailing desires of his heart, and each relishes only what suits the temper of his mind. No wonder if he who can see nothing to hope or fear beyond this world, indulge himself in all the gratifications of sense, and treat himself like the beasts that perish, as if he had been formed only to eat, drink, and die. No wonder if he lives as he lists, who looks not to give an account of his conduct. But if all men could learn to live looking for another world, under near and immediate views of the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the
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Great God and Saviour, we should soon see this another and a better world. We should preach, and all would hear with profit and pleasure.

Let us all, therefore, learn to live like men that look for the coming of their Lord, girding up the loins of our mind, being sober, and hoping to the end for the grace that shall be revealed unto us at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter, i. 13. And diligent that we may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless. 2 Peter, iii. 14. Amen.

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S E R M O N XI.

THE DEATH OF GOOD MEN.

DEUTERONOMY, xxxiv. 5.

*So Moses the servant of the Lord died there,
in the land of Moab, according to the
word of the Lord.*

THE honourable character here given to Moses is equal to that of angels, the highest order of creatures—They are styled ministers of God—sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation. Moses is styled the servant of the Lord: And this honourable epitaph is inscribed upon his tomb; for this is the character given to him when he had finished his work, and was going to receive his reward. He lived and died in the faith of an unseen Saviour
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and an unseen world, and therefore always acted as beholding him who is invisible, the rewarder of all that diligently seek him; Heb. ii. 24—27. As a servant he was faithful in all the house of God; Heb. iii. 5. Having been faithful to the death, he went to receive the crown of life. A blessed exit—A glorious and honourable escape from a toilsome and vexatious life—A noble example—A powerful encouragement to all the servants of God to persevere with unremitting diligence in the course of their duty, and patiently to endure unto the end. The memory of the just is blessed—And the mouth of God himself, the righteous Judge of characters, shall one day honour them all before the world of angels and men, with that high commendation he hath here given unto Moses—Well done good and faithful servants: Enter into the joy of your Lord.

He died, my text says, in the land of Moab: Not in the land of Egypt where he was born; not in the land of Canaan which he longed to see, and where he wished to be buried with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

Jacob, heirs of the same promise, but in a strange land. Though Moses was the first-rate friend of God upon earth in his day, yet it seemed not meet unto God to grant his desire in this; Deut. iii. 23.—27. It belongs not to men to fix when, where, or how they shall die, but to God. His will is the law of life and death. There was this singular circumstance in the death of Moses, that God had told him before hand that he was to die in the land of Moab, and his dying there was dying according to the word of the Lord; but, at the same time, these words may signify the resignation of Moses to the will of God. He was earnest with God to spare him till he had seen the promised land. It pleased the Lord so far to gratify his desire, as to give him a distant view of it from the top of Mount Pisgah; and then he submitted to the divine will: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.' It might seem hard to flesh and blood. He was yet in a state of health and vigour of mind and body, verse 7.—He had endured forty years toil and travel in
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expectation of the promised land; and now when he is come to the very borders of it, is not allowed to set a foot there.— Another must enter into his labours, and that not a son, but a servant. Yet Moses chearfully delivers up his charge to his successor, and breathes out his soul according to the appointment of God. He chearfully obeyed the summons to depart. His life was not forced from him: He gave it up at the commandment of God.

The encomium given to Moses directs our meditation to this point, That it is a great and necessary act of duty to die according to the will of God. And what I propose, through divine grace, is,

I. To shew how the will of God is concerned in our death.

II. What sort of obedience we are to yield to it.

III. Why we should do so.

IV.

IV. To make the proper application of this subject.

I. To show how the will of God is concerned in our death.

1. The general sentence of mortality is fixed by God; Genesis, iii. 19. Ecclesiastes, xii. 7. and Hebrews, ix. 27. It is the common lot of all men. Nor can any exception be made but by the divine will. Of all that ever lived upon earth we have heard only of two exempted from death, Enoch and Elias—And no promise that we hear of was ever given to any of them that they should not die: It was a sovereign act of the divine will, an extraordinary privilege granted to them, which can never give another mortal the least ground to hope for the like. We hear likewise in the word of God, that the saints which are alive at the coming of the Lord shall not die, but be changed. And this likewise is the work and will of God alone. But even translation itself is but a more honourable and easy kind of death, and the change then made implies a separation of the spirit from mortal and corruptible flesh. For flesh and blood,

blood, such as we now have, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality; 1 Cor. xv. 50. and 53. The servants of the Lord must die as well as others.

2. Death receives its peculiar commission from God. It cannot strike but by his order or permission. Life and death are in his hand. To him it belongs to wound and to heal, to kill and to make alive, to save and to destroy; Deut. xxxii. 39. Creatures live or die at his pleasure. He sendeth forth his Spirit, they are created—He taketh away their breath, they die, and return to their dust; Psal. civ. 29. 30. Death must do its work on whomsoever he wills, and the fatal stroke is but the execution of his command.

3. The time is fixed by his will. There is a time to be born, and a time to die, both appointed by God. He hath set the bounds of our habitation that we cannot pass. Our days are with him, the number of our months he hath appointed; Job, xiv. 5. If one is carried from the womb

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to the grave, another taken off in his infancy, another in the prime of life, while the breasts are full of milk, and the bones are moistened with marrow, and another left to wear out life under the weight of age and infirmities, it is all because the times of all men are wholly in his hand, who marks out the day that every one shall die. He gives every one their measure of life, as well as their comforts, and when his time is come, there is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war; Eccles. viii. 8. All the care and skill of man cannot prolong life for a moment, give the heart another pulse, the lungs another breath beyond that which he hath marked out for the last; death must exactly observe the date of his warrant to dismiss the soul from the body.

4. The place where, as well as the time when we shall die, is fixed by his will. Abraham and Isaac must die in Canaan, Jacob and Joseph in Egypt, Aaron in Mount Hor, Moses in Mount Nebo, because

cause God had so appointed. Some die by sea, others on land; some in one corner, others in another; every one in his place according to the will of God.

5. The means of death natural, violent, or casual, are all under his direction. What appears chance or accident to us, is all certain and determined with him. Thus, when one man accidentally kills another without any fore-thought or design, God is said to deliver him into his hand. Exod. xxi. 13. A sparrow cannot fall to the ground, much less a man die without him. A hair of our heads cannot perish, a bone of our bodies cannot be broken, nor a vessel burst without him. Every incident, every disease, executes his orders; every mean of death fulfils his word. And tho' the purpose of God may be hid from us under the operation of second causes, yet it is no less certain than when he is seen to counteract the stated course of nature. We are but too ready to impute events to visible causes, and state all that to chance for which we cannot account, while all is the work of a wise providence to fulfil the will of
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of him in whose hands are the ways of all his creatures and the breath of all mankind. A stone falls, the head slips off the handle of an axe, a ball or an arrow flies, a stumbling stone is placed in the way, by which this or the other person is taken off, but all by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God. A man drew a bow at a venture, knew not whom or whether he should kill, but the hand of God sent death on the point, and directed it to the only place where an arrow could pierce, to the heart of Ahab, between the joints of his harness. 1 Kings, xxii. 34. In like manner, God designing the death of the good king Josiah, though the archers knew him not, being in disguise, they shot at a venture, but God directed the arrows to him. 2. Chron. xxxv. 22, 23. However accidental death may appear, and however capable visible causes may be to effect it, they are all but instruments in the hand of God to fulfil his will, and without his direction or permission can never dismiss a single soul.

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6. The manner and circumstances of our death are all determined by the will of God. Some are taken away suddenly, and by surprize, others slowly, and by degrees; some with strong pain, others with great ease; some one way, others another; but the endless variety of circumstances in the death of men are all chosen and determined by God. All living die like Moses, according to the word of the Lord. They live by his pleasure, they die at his command; and therefore obedience to his will is our indispensable duty. Let us now consider,

II. What sort of obedience we ought to yield to the will of God in dying. On this head, I propose, *1st*, to shew what is not inconsistent with this obedience; and, *2^{dly}*, To point out the proper qualifications of it.

I. There are many things not inconsistent with this obedience to the will of God. Every ones life is a charge committed by God to him, and he must account for his care in preserving it. Therefore he

he is bound by all lawful means to cherish and support it; to use such remedies and helps as God puts within his reach to prevent the extinction of it. And though the purpose of God may work against the designs of men, and all remedies may prove useless, it is our duty still to use them, because his design concerning our life is never to be known but by the event, and he still reserves in his own hand the power to bless or to blast them. The weakest remedies may fulfil his will, and the most powerful can do nothing against it. It is our duty to make use of means, but his right to give or deny them success. Thus, in the case of Hezekiah, God prescribed a lump of figs to the boil, that otherwise would have put an end to his life. Hezekiah must apply the cure, or he must die, because that was the mean that God had chosen for his recovery. Many, no doubt, have used the like cure in the like case, but not with like success, because so was the will of God. *Isaiah, xxxviii. 21.*

2. Conditional requests for sparing mercy are not inconsistent with obedience to

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the will of God. In this we are authorized by the word and example of our blessed Lord. Luke, xxii. 42. 'If thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.' However it shall issue, in life or death, it is our duty to say with the Disciples concerning Paul, Acts, xxi. 14. 'The will of the Lord be done.' We may pray with the Psalmist, xxxix. 13. 'O! spare me that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more;' but still with submission to the will of God.

3. A due care in settling our worldly affairs before we die, is consistent with our obedience to the will of God in taking us away, that we may prevent as much as possible all strife and litigation among surviving friends, and save the world we leave behind us all the trouble we can. It was the command of God himself to Hezekiah, Isaiah, xxxviii. 1. 'Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die.'

4. A zealous pursuit of religious concerns to the last well consists with our obedience

dience to the will of God in dying. Thus we see it was the work of Moses to the very last day of his life, to settle the civil and religious concerns of the children of Israel, and to give instructions to Joshua, his successor, and to the people, how to conduct themselves after his death. In like manner, David zealously prepared for the house of God to his dying day, though he was not allowed to build it.

5. The strugglings of nature against the bitterness of death may consist with our obedience in dying. This is evident in the conduct of him who never sinned. Bitter, indeed, was the cup which his Father had given him to drink. His human nature felt reluctance, yet he readily drank it off, because it was his Father's will. And so may we, though flesh and blood, feel horrors at the thought of severing the soul from the body.

Having seen what is not inconsistent with the obedience here exemplified, let us next consider what it implies,

1. A quiet expecting and waiting for God's call. The circumstances of a person's life may be so grievous and tormenting, that he would be glad to find the grave, and seek refuge in death. Here God cuts out work for patience, and this being the last trial, patience may here find its perfect work. This requires that we should do nothing that tends to shorten our day, by giving way to impatience, fretfulness, discontent, or violent agitation of passions of any kind, or by neglecting the means of preserving life while we can, however painful it may be. God's time should be ours; and we should wait for it with all possible composure and tranquillity of mind. When the evils of life are many, severe, and long continued, nature struggles hard with grace in such a situation, and even good men sometimes yield in the conflict. Elijah, Jonah, Job, Rebecca, turned weary of life, and wished to die rather than live. But we are not to imitate them in their infirmities, but to copy the perfect example of our Lord, who patiently waited till his hour was come, and

and finished his work both in doing and suffering, according to the will of God.

2. An humble bearing of God's fatherly displeasure, if there should be any tokens of it upon us in our death. Even Moses, the servant of the Lord, died not without a correction. God was displeased with him, because he spake unadvisedly with his lips at the waters of Meribah, and, therefore, would not suffer him to go over and die in the land of Canaan, as he earnestly desired, but in the land of Moab. Deut. xxxii. 51. But Moses meekly and humbly submitted to the will of God, and in the land of Moab he died according to the word of the Lord. A lesson to all the servants of God to bear the corrections of their heavenly Father with humility, whether in life or death.

3. A final farewell to the world, and particularly to those things that render a stay in it most desirable. Nothing in this world sticks so close to the soul of a dying saint, as the dear friends and relations he must leave behind him. It is a sore pull to a tender heart, to be torn from the embraces

braces of those whom he loves as his own soul; but a servant of the Lord, viewing death as the will of God, will readily part with life and friends at his call, commending them to the care of his heavenly Father. Did ever, or could ever man love his friends as Christ Jesus did? He took life for their sakes; he laid it down for their sakes; and had it been good for them, he would have staid with them still. But it was good for them that he should go away, and as it was the will of his heavenly Father, he would not tarry longer with them here, but takes a most affectionate farewell of them before he parts. And how earnestly does he pray for them, how warmly recommend his beloved charge to the care and kind protection of his heavenly Father? John, xvii. 11. Here a departing saint may read his duty both to his God and his friends.

4. A quitting this mortal flesh in hopes of a happy resurrection. Here lies the consolation both of the dying and the living. The departing believer knows that when

when his earthly tabernacle is dissolved, he shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ; 2 Cor. v. 1. that the body of corruption, which is going to the grave, shall be raised in incorruption, and fashioned like to the glorious body of his Saviour Christ Jesus by his almighty power ; Phil. iii. 21. And all his surviving friends, who live and die in the faith of Christ, may well look upon his separation as a pledge of his happiness, and a ground of their joy, as a parting only for a little, to meet where they shall never part, never die any more ; where their joy shall be full. Accordingly saith the Apostle, 1 Theff. iv. 13. 14. ‘ Brethren, ‘ I would not have you ignorant concerning ‘ them that are asleep ; that ye sorrow not ‘ even as others which have no hope. For ‘ if we believe that Jesus died, and rose ‘ again, even so them also which sleep in ‘ Jesus will God bring with him.’ Here we have joy in their gain to counterbalance our sorrow for our loss. A Christian may well drop a tear over the bier of a dear departed

parted friend ; nature demands it, grace does not forbid it ; but to sorrow much, or sorrow long, becomes him not. That must be left to them who have no hope. The consolations of God should set bounds to his grief, and spur him on with greater diligence and dispatch in that way of life which promises a happy meeting another day. The will of God should silence every murmur, and dry up his tears.

5. Obedience to the will of God in dying, implies a willing surrender of our souls into his hands from whence they originally came. Die we must, but to will it when God commands is another thing. On that awful occasion, nothing so well becomes a servant of the Lord, as that sweet composure and submission in giving up the ghost, of which both the brothers have left an example. Aaron, the priest, of whom it is said, Numb. xxxiii. 38. 'He went up into Mount Hor, at the commandment of the Lord, and died there ;' and Moses, 'who died in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.'

6. An awful and serious preparation to give an account of ourselves unto God. It is the principal work of a believer's life to prepare for the coming of his Lord. But when his Lord is at hand, the faithful steward will canvass his accounts, will look them over with great seriousness and deep attention, that he may be ready to give them with joy and not with grief. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord shall find so doing when he cometh.

7. A thankful entertainment of our dismissal from the body as a real privilege. A believer, though it were possible, would not wish to live here always. This is not the place of his rest. He has other and higher views, and expects better things than this world can afford. He hopes to be with Christ, which is far better than to remain in the body, and therefore must look upon a separation from it as a high privilege, a call of advancement to an inheritance incorruptible, to joy unspeakable and full of glory. Had the Apostle Paul got his choice, he would have died much sooner than he did; Phil. i. 21—24. But

he submitted to the will of God, and patiently waited his time. However, when he saw it at hand, he was thankful, he rejoiced at the sight of death; 2 Tim. iv. 6. 7. 8. In like manner, good old Simeon having got what, by the will of God, he lived only to see, claims death as a privilege promised by God; Luke, ii. 29. 30. 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' And every sincere believer in Christ will regard his departure hence as a necessary step to advancement, and thankfully receive the message to come and see what eye never saw, ear never heard, and it never entered into the heart of man to conceive.

8. A vigorous exercise of faith with respect to an unseen state, when God is leading us on to it. Heb. xi. 8. 'By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whether he went.' It was enough to him that God had given the call, though he had given him no account of the place or the way that led to it.

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He believed, and therefore obeyed: So should every believer in Christ, when he is calling him to an unknown world, exercise a firm faith and confidence in him. Then shall his soul fear no evil when he walks through the valley of the shadow of death. The Lord will be his guide and guard; his rod and his staff will comfort him.

Let me stop here for a little to make one inference from what hath been said.

If it be our duty to give up our souls at the will of God, surely no less to part with our dearest friends at his call. To this purpose, God here speaks plainly in his word, and loudly to us by his providence. For it has seemed good in his sight to deprive us of a very amiable, useful, and worthy character, and in a way that remarkably affects all the tender feelings of humanity*, even in strangers that may hear it, and how much more in those who had the

* Mrs Johnston of Renny-hill thrown from her carriage, August 19, 1779, and so severely bruised, that she died in two days after.

the happiness of her acquaintance. Blest with a happy mixture both of a chearful and serious mind, formed to make all happy around her—Rejoicing in opportunities of doing good—With a munificent hand from a large and liberal heart—A helper of the helpless, a friend to the needy, which many in this place well know—Affable, kind, and condescending to all—Doing harm to none, speaking ill of none, discharging all the duties of wife, mother, mistress, neighbour, friend, with honour; and in her religious character a noble example of serious, devout, and constant attendance upon divine ordinances, as all that hear me can witness. And with what pleasure I have many times conversed with her upon the most serious subjects, I cannot tell. It touches me too nearly to insist, and some that hear me more tenderly still. Let us, therefore, like the Psalmist, lay our hands upon our mouths, and be dumb, because the Lord hath done this, and learn this good lesson from it, to die according to the will of God, which will abundantly make

make up this and all the losses we can sustain. Let us,

III. Consider the reasons why we ought to yield the obedience that has been explained.

I. God is our supreme and absolute Lord, who hath an indisputable right to our obedience, and we hold our life by no other tenure but his will. This is the law of our nature. We are made for no other use, no other end, but to do the will of God. Our souls are his, our bodies his. We have nothing we can call our own. What have we that we have not received? Life is not an absolute gift which we may use as we please: It is but a talent lent us wherewith to occupy till our Lord is pleased to call us to a reckoning. And it is but just to render unto God the thing that is God's, and return the breath which he hath lent unto us, when, where, and how he is pleased to appoint. And it would be as foolish as ungrateful and unjust to refuse it. For his counsel shall stand—He will do all his pleasure, whether we will or not. When his time is come, away we must go. Beyond

yond his day we cannot tarry. Nor prayers, nor tears, can avail to sist the execution of his command. We can no more prevent the day we shall die, than we could foretel the day we should be born: no more stop our descent to the grave than raise ourselves again from the dead. And therefore to murmur, grudge, and repine, to resist and oppose his will, may well add to our condemnation, but never to our comfort. To transgress within sight of judgment, is a violent aggravation of iniquity; to refuse the last summons of the Most High, is adding iniquity to sin, ingratitude to rebellion. There is no other way to be wise or safe, but in complying with his will, and saying, as Eli did, 1 Sam. iii. 18. 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good in his sight.'

2. Consider we are his servants, and contradict our own profession if we die not according to his will. We own subjection with our lips, we deny it with our hearts, while we refuse to remove at his call. We call him Lord, Lord, yet do not what he saith. Is it not just and right that the servant

vant should answer when his Lord calls—should come, when he saith come—go, when he bids him go—do this or that which he commands? And how can it stand with our duty, as servants of the Lord, to strive and struggle against his will, when he bids us go hence and come to him? to be dragged and driven against inclination, when he commands us to die? Nature may judge it hard duty indeed. But that can be no reason for disobedience; otherwise the will of the servant, and not of the Lord, would be the rule of duty; and he might decline, at his pleasure, whatever himself judged difficult service. But a good servant will account the hardest duty his greatest honour, because it is the strongest trial of his integrity, the clearest proof of his fidelity to his Lord. The hottest service is the post of honour, and the place where valiant men should be. That gives the fairest opportunity to signalize their courage, their constancy, and their resolution to serve their King at any expence, at all hazards, and in all events. Read a sample of this in Paul the servant of Jesus Christ. He held

held his possessions, reputation, friends, country, gifts, attainments, liberty, life, all at the service of his Lord. It was no easy work he was called to, yet he never complained of the hardship, nor declined the service in any case, nor thought of pretences to shift it; on the contrary, he grew bold in the face of danger, and animated at the sight of death; Acts, xx. 22, 23, 24. and xxi. 13. and 2 Tim. iv. 6. If every servant of Christ come not to his size, neither is every one called to such difficult work. But the harder the trial is, the greater the honour of the victory. A good reason to go through with it, but none to shift it. If death feel hard to his servants, the greater their credit in resignation to the will of their Lord. But disobedience to his will can never be justified. If we own ourselves, therefore, the servants of the Lord, we confess it our indispensable duty to depart at his call, and chearfully to give up our souls to him, notwithstanding the bitterness of death.

3. Consider the example that our Lord hath given us in this. Never was death so bitter

bitter to mortal man as to him. Pangs unfelt and horrors inconceivable distressed and amazed his soul. He felt death in its most dreadful form, yet he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and laid down his life, because it was his Father's will; John, x. 17, 18. To subdue the terrors of death, and encourage his people to follow his example, the Captain of our salvation hath gone through the grave before us; and by his death he hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel; 2 Tim. i. 10. The power of death lies not merely in a separation of the soul from the body, but in securing that separation, and for ever preventing a return to life. Now Christ hath abolished this power of death, by his resurrection from the dead, and thereby secured our return to life, which death can never take away any more. 'Because he lives, we shall live also;' John, xiv. 19. Because he can never die, neither shall his people die any more. Like their blessed Master, they must feel death for once, that they may triumph over death for evermore. Well, therefore, may they sub-

mit to the stroke that will secure for them life everlasting, and for ever extinguish the power of death. Well may they follow his example, who laid down his life that he might take it up again, and put it out of the power of death to touch them any more. Should a believer in Christ be backward to follow him, or seek another road to heaven, than that which he hath taken?

4. Another reason why we should yield obedience to the will of God in dying is, that God's time is the fittest and best. He who knows all that is to come, as well as all that is past and present, knows best whether it is fitter to spill or to spare the blood of his servants; how long it is good for them to live, and when it is better for them to die. But sooner or later than he sees it meet for them, they shall not die. 'For their death is precious in his sight;' Psal. cxvi. 15. Could they foresee the evils they leave behind them, the miseries of life to which they would be exposed, the risks and dangers they might run of falling away from their steadfastness in the faith, themselves would
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chuse to die rather than live. Therefore God, who knows what must follow, removes them in due season, that they may not see the evils to come, and hides them in the grave; *Isaiah, lvii. 1.*; as he did with the two good kings of Judah, Hezekiah and Josiah, who both died young. He knows best when they are ripe for immortality, and gathers their souls to himself in their season, be they young or old. Therefore is it said, *Isaiah, lxxv. 20.* 'The child shall die an hundred years old.' The child that is blessed with the piety and wisdom of age, is as fit to die as the saint that lives to an hundred, and therefore shall die a child, as the son of Jeroboam did; *1 Kings, xiv. 12. 13.* As God best knows the times of life and death fit for every one, his time to remove us should be ours, and we should chearfully resign our breath whensoever he is pleased to call it away.

5. This is the finishing act of our obedience to God in this world, and it is but holding out a little longer, and then our work goes with us, and our reward is before us; *Rev. xv. 13.* In the labours of
life,

life, it rouses up all the remains of our strength to see the end approaching. The weary pilgrim strives to quicken his pace, when he draws near the end of his journey. The mariner, tossed in the storm, exerts all his skill and vigour to enter the port when he is come within sight of it. The racer, at sight of the goal, strains and stretches every nerve to reach it, and make a last effort to gain the prize, and finish his course with joy. And is there not as good reason to behave in like manner in a more glorious cause, and for a more glorious end? They travel, they toil and run for corruptible things, but the servants of the Lord for an incorruptible crown. Surely the last act of a good man's life should not be the worst; and he who has submitted to the will of God, through the many and various trials of a painful life, should not be backward and reluctant in the last act of obedience he is capable to perform,

6. Dying with resignation to the good will of God will have the greatest influence on those we leave behind us. The last acts of life, especially of a good man, commonly

commonly leave the deepest impression, stick fastest in the memory, and go nearest to the heart. A lesson then comes home to the bosom, warm from the heart to the heart, and proves a powerful incitement to imitation. Nothing is more likely to persuade us to live like him than that we may die like him. To yield obedience to the command of God in the face of death, is truly dying in the bed of honour; it animates all who behold it to finish their combat with like courage and resolution, and it even makes wicked men wish to die in like manner. Numb. xxiii. 10. 'Let me die the death of the righteous, said Balaam, and let my last end be like his.'

7. This is an act of obedience from which the chiefest favourites of heaven are not exempted. Abraham is dead. Moses and the Prophets are dead. We are not better than our fathers who are dead. Whom would we make ourselves? Would we claim a privilege which God denied to his best servants, nay, to his own blessed Son? God spared not his own Son. It was his will he should die for us, and he died

died according to the will of his Father. He spared not himself, but delivered up himself to the death for us all. And, after this, would we be excused? What more could we wish to make us die cheerfully, than to see our Saviour die before us, and for our sakes? After this, it must be both ingratitude and sin to refuse to die at God's command. We but go the way of all living when we die, and would we wish to outlive all living? Would we be excused from going the way of all the earth? Go we must, and is it not wise to do that willingly which we know we must, whether we will or not?

8. To die in obedience to the will of God, is an honour peculiar to the saints, which angels cannot share. They are the highest servants of God who do his will perfectly in all things, and far excel the best of men, both in ability and willingness, to obey what he commands; but their nature renders them incapable of doing what we may do to give proof of our obedience to the commandment of the Most High. In this we may excel the very angels

gels of God. Believers shall one day be made like unto the angels, but angels can never be like unto them in this respect. They cannot die in obedience to the will of God as we may do. This is the peculiar privilege of saints. We have but one opportunity, and in one thing only, to signalize our obedience above that of the most glorious ministers of God, that is by dying in obedience to his will. Let us not slip such a glorious opportunity, but gird up the loins of our mind, and march with promptitude and alacrity whensoever it shall please God to call us away.

IV. I shall now apply what hath been said in three inferences, and three exhortations.

1. If it be our duty to be obedient even unto death, how much more to submit to all those evils that precede it? We are bound both to do and to suffer according to the will of God, and if in that which is greater, we can have no reason to hesitate in that which is less. He need not be afraid of any evil who is willing to face the

the king of terrors. Whatever calamities may befall us in life, they are all by the direction or permission of him that ruleth over all. The will of God is equally concerned in all the troubles of our life as in our death, and we are equally obliged to submit in all things to the will of him, who knows how to make all things work together for our good. However irksome and uneasy life may be through manifold temptations, they are all but light and short in comparison, not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Rom. viii. 18. And he who appoints them, can make all these sufferings that seem to work hard against us, to work for us, and dispose them so, as not only to leave us a balance of happiness in the end, but to assure a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Cor. iv. 19. He can make all the bitters of life health to the soul, effectual in clearing off all the dregs of corruption, and giving new spring and vigour to every grace and virtue fit and necessary to qualify us for immortal glory. Patience, therefore, and submission to the will of God is our duty,

duty, our interest, our wisdom in life or death.

2. If dying according to the will of God is so great and necessary an act of obedience, it is an act of great goodness and indulgence in God to spare us; to allow time to prepare those who are not ready. He is gracious, and waiting to be gracious, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2 Peter, iii.

9. Many a soul his mercy hath saved, who, if they had been cut off in their sins, had perished for ever; but by his granting them space for repentance, and assurance of pardon upon turning from the evil of their doings, they have been plucked like brands from the burning, and rescued from endless misery. What sweet and powerful encouragement is this to improve our time by laying up for eternity, and to manage the remains of life in preparing for death? Remember that God doth not grant time for nought, and that time cannot always last. Life must have an end. And think what ungrateful abuse of goodness it must be to waste that time in wickedness, which God

grants for repentance. The very voice of nature whispers what the word of revelation proclaims, that the goodness of God should lead us to repentance. And if we continue to abuse it, time is no blessing to such, but an opportunity of treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Rom. ii. 4, 5. Every day of life adds to their condemnation, through the hardness and impenitence of their hearts. Better it had been for such to have been cut off in early life, than live to an hundred. At least it would have been an alleviation of their misery. For the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. Isaiah, lxxv. 20. A wicked life makes a cursed death, and the longer life, the heavier curse. What a mercy for an old sinner to have another day, another opportunity to cancel and obliterate the manifold iniquities and mighty sins of a long ill-spent life? What goodness in God to grant it! What ingratitude and sin to abuse it! Let sparing mercy therefore spur us on to diligence and

and dispatch in preparing for the day of our death.

3. Here we may see that they finish a good life with an honourable death who die in obedience to the will of God, and leave a grateful remembrance behind them. These are the persons of blessed memory. A good man going out of the world with a placid mind, in obedience to the will of God, like the setting sun, gilds the hemisphere behind him with all the glories of variegated light, pleasing to the eye, grateful to the heart, and brightens the hope of the living to meet him with joy another day. A more powerful example to live and die well, or a more delightful sight this world doth not furnish, than a saint finishing his course with joy. Let us then be exhorted,

1. To make death familiar to our minds by frequent fore-thought; not to damp or dispirit us, but to spur us on with greater diligence and dispatch to provide for it, by attending more carefully to the various duties we owe to God, to our neighbours and ourselves. This is the work that God hath

hath given us to do in the world ; this is the way to prepare for death ; in this lies all the use and benefit of thinking about it. Death is the night in which we must sleep ; life is the day in which we must labour : And as the day is lost, if we spend it all in thinking how we are to rest at night, so life would be useless if it should be spent in continual thinking upon death. Our thoughts of death, indeed, should be both serious and frequent, but all with a view to stir us up to duty. The thought that the night is coming should excite us to mind our work while it is day, because, when night is come, we can no longer work. John, ix. 4. Our thoughts of death, therefore, must not be continual or excessive, but seasonable, that we may be up and doing what our hands find to do. And it becomes us readily to embrace and improve all those occasions in life, whether joyful or distressing, when thoughts of death may recur with advantage.

2. Let us look upon all the enjoyments of life with a holy indifference, and respect them no further than as mere conveniences

cies appointed by God to help us on in our work and way to a better world. Any degree of attachment to any thing in this world that can divert our attention from the great end of our faith, or retard our progress to a better world, exceeds the bounds of affection we owe to it, and it would be better for us to want than to have it. For a Christian's heart should be set, not upon the things that are beneath, but the things that are above. There lies his inheritance, his property, his enjoyment. However men may talk and fight about heritage and property here, there is no real inheritance or property for man upon earth. Estates and possessions of every sort in this world are all but moveable goods, temporary possessions, and all the real comfort and advantage of them consists in the moderate use and enjoyment of them, in subordination to our better views beyond the grave; and, therefore, they should be treated with that indifference which is due to matters in which we have only an inferior concern. Without this, however they may glare
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in the eye, or gratify the heart, they wound the soul.

3. Let us live upon the death of Christ as the only foundation of our hope. It is this alone that could purchase our title to eternal life, and assure a reconciliation between the Holy God and sinful men. His obedience unto death alone could save us from the power of death; and it is only by faith in the merits of his death, that we can have any just ground to hope for peace, for pardon, and eternal life. If he had not died for us, we had all died without mercy; all lived without hope. But now he is our buckler and our shield; he is the lifter up of our heads; he is our strength and our song; he also is become our salvation. Let us therefore sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. By his death, he hath overcome him that had the power of death, that is the Devil; and delivered us from the fear of death. Heb. ii. 14. 15. Let us, therefore, never lose sight of this, which alone can give us
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peace and comfort in life, courage and confidence in death, and present us before the throne of grace without spot, and with exceeding joy. Amen.

SER-

S E R M O N XII.

THE PRAYER OF CHRIST FOR HIS
DISCIPLES.

JOHN, xvii. 24.

*Father, I will that they also whom thou
hast given me be with me where I am ;
that they may behold my glory which thou
hast given me : For thou lovedst me be-
fore the foundation of the world.*

NOW the important hour was at hand,
big with the salvation of men. Christ
was to die next day a propitiation for sin,
and he concludes his instructions to his
disciples with a farewell prayer for them,
in which we may read the love of his heart
glowing on his lips ; one most sweet and
comfortable article of which is expressed in
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the words of our text. And, oh ! it is like him. He was to lay down his life for them, and take it up again, but he could not think of living without them. I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where, in a little, I am to be, that is, in heaven. His language runs in the stile of a dying friend, and he bequeathes them nothing less than eternal life for a legacy. And himself hath expressly taught us not to confine this prayer to the little flock he had with him at that time, but to extend it to all who, through their word, should believe on him.

Here all true believers in Christ may read their portion, and learn what they have to look for at last, Where we may observe,

I. The persons for whom Christ offers this prayer.

II. The happiness implied in being with him.

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III.

III. The certainty of this happiness to all those for whom he prays.

I propose, through divine assistance, to speak a little on each of these heads, and conclude with a few inferences.

I. As to the persons for whom he prays, they are here distinguished by a particular epithet, 'Those that the Father hath given him.'

He prays not for all men promiscuously and without distinction. Nay, he excludes many from the benefit of his prayer, whom he calls the world, in direct opposition to those whom he here means; verse 9. 'I pray for them, I pray not for the world; but for them which thou hast given me.' And no less than seven times doth he thus design them within the bounds of this chapter: By which our blessed Lord confirms that doctrine which he taught, John, vi. 44. 'No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.' And what he means by drawing, himself explains in the next verse, by a quotation

tation from the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. Not that any man is compelled against his inclination, but instructed to come unto Christ. 'For,' saith he, 'it is written, they shall be all taught of God.' God's drawing is by teaching. Every man, therefore, he adds, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me: every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, not immediately, but by Christ. And therefore he adds, Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, that is Christ himself; he hath seen the Father. From whence it appears evident, that God the Father is the first mover in the salvation of man. He gives them to Christ to be instructed in the way to eternal life, and persuaded to embrace the terms of salvation which he offers; and, consequently, it is altogether a work of grace in God, and not of merit in man, that any soul is saved. This is a doctrine of which the Scripture is full, to teach us to ascribe all the praise and glory of every good work done in us or by us in order to eternal life, to God alone. 'He hath saved

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‘ ed us and called us with an holy calling ;’
2 Tim. i. 19. and Tit. iii. 5. 6. This important truth our Lord brings to view, when he distinguisheth his disciples by this designation, Those that the Father had given him, viz. to be saved : Yet not absolutely, and without all conditions, but upon terms which he hath prescribed. And accordingly our Lord characterizes the disciples for whom he prays by this, verse 20th, that they believe on him. And God hath chosen us unto salvation, saith the Apostle, 2 Theff. ii. 13. through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. Nay, this is the very end of God’s chusing us in Christ, as he teacheth, Ephes. i. 4. ‘ that we should be holy and without blame ‘ before him in love.’ We must be made holy and like unto God, before we can be happy in the enjoyment of him. ‘ For ‘ without holiness, no man shall see the ‘ Lord ;’ Heb. xii. 14. And this is the use of our faith, to purify our hearts, and so to regulate our conversation ; Acts, xv. 9.

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The way, therefore, for us to know whether we are among that blessed number who are given of God unto Christ, and for whom he prays, is not by searching into the hidden decrees of heaven, but by searching our own hearts and lives. If we have such a faith in Christ as influenceth us to purify ourselves from all uncleanness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, this is the work of God in us, and the evidence of our special interest in him. But if we indulge ourselves in the practice of sin, this is the work of the devil, which the Son of God was manifested to destroy, not the operation of God. And therefore, unless we repent and be converted from the evil of our way, we can have no just ground to hope that we shall be with Christ to behold his glory.

II. I proposed to consider the happiness implied in being with Christ.

To be with Christ in any state is a peculiar blessing. This is enough to sanctify any lot, and render the hardest state in life comfortable. They have nothing to fear,
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every thing to hope that are sheltered under his protection. They have the fairest opportunity to learn all that is truly great and good who dwell in his presence. And whatever a blinded world did think, his few faithful followers reckoned and found it a greater blessing to be with him, even in his state of humiliation, than all their enjoyments in life. For they left all and followed him. They counted his company and friendship more than sufficient to overbalance all the hardships they could endure in his service. They reckoned the reproach of Christ greater treasure than the riches of the world, and gloried in suffering with him and for him. And so every soul will judge that knows and loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. However, suffering is a dead weight upon enjoyment, and to be with Christ where he now is, must be another and a better thing than to be with him in any situation upon earth. For now he is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, in whose presence is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. No evil can dwell where he is—nor sin, nor sorrow,

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nor suffering of any kind. There the wicked cease from troubling; there the weary be at rest. Affliction shall never rise up a second time. Once with Christ, and we are safe for ever. We shall never see, nor hear, nor feel, nor fear evil any more. But great as it is, this is the least part of their happiness who shall be with Christ, here expressed by beholding his glory.

What that glory is, we have neither language to express, nor powers to comprehend; but beholding it plainly implies,

1. A clear and distinct knowledge of it. As sight is the largest avenue to the soul of all the senses, so it conveys the most clear and satisfying knowledge of external objects to the mind, and ocular demonstration to a proverb is irresistible evidence. Now we but believe the glory of our Redeemer as far as it hath been revealed, and we are capable to understand; but when we are with him, we shall be eye witnesses of it, and inconceivably more capable to understand it. Now, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. 'We see through a glass
' darkly; but then face to face: Now we
' know

‘ know in part, but then we shall know, even as we are known.’ Then we shall know the grandeur of his state—elevated above all principality and power, Ephes. i. 21.—the dignity of his person; and see how all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.—By that sight we shall clearly understand that great mystery of godliness, how God was manifested in the flesh, and read the ineffable glory of God in the man Christ Jesus—The lustre of his throne—The magnificence of his retinue—Thousands of thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand glorious angels standing before him.—Then we shall understand the immensity of his power and the perfection of his wisdom in creating, disposing, governing, and preserving the worlds, visible and invisible. We shall behold all the angels of God worshipping him, and all the high dignities of heaven casting their crowns before him, and saying, with a loud voice, ‘ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain;’ Rev. v. 12. Then we shall comprehend the wonders of his love—feel the inviolable fidelity of his promises

promises, and praise the honours of his holiness with judgment and understanding.— Then we shall be able to unravel all the intricacies of his providence, and see all the various windings and turnings of things below resolved into one uniform and uninterrupted line of love. Then we shall behold his glory, which now we cannot see, and with other eyes than now we have— We shall know it, and know it to purpose, when once we are with him.

2. To be with Christ to behold his glory, means not only the clearness but the perpetuity of our knowledge of it. It is not a sudden glance, a transient view, like that of the Apostle Paul when he was rapt up into heaven, which would be sufficient to waken wonder, gratitude, and love, yet leave the mind to feed upon the reflection, but void of the enjoyment. But it is an abiding sight. For to be with Christ denotes residence, not peregrination; and to be with him where he now is, is to reside with him in an unchangeable state of glory. Our beholding his glory, therefore, in that state must be as permanent as our residence

with him. And so it must denote a fixed, perpetual, and everlasting knowledge of his glory.

3. To be with him to behold his glory means a participation of it, and that we ourselves shall be glorified in beholding his glory. We are not to be with him like unconcerned spectators, who have no personal interest in the glorious scene; but as the Apostle writes, 2 Cor. iii. 18. 'While, with open face, we behold the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory.' Even now, though we see him not as he is, but as he appears through the darkness and distance of this state, yet believing we rejoice in him, and learn something of the same mind that was in Christ, and to walk as he hath given us an example. By conversing with him by faith, in the use of all appointed means, we contract something of a likeness to him, and it may be seen who they are that have been with Jesus. However the most exact resemblance of him here cannot impart a just and adequate conception of the perfect likeness which his presence shall draw upon

upon our souls, when we are with him where he now is, beholding his glory. Accordingly, saith the Apostle John, 1 Epistle, iii. 2. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.' This blessed sight of Christ in his glory shall stamp his image full and exact to perfection upon our persons, and make us as like him as we can possibly be. We shall be perfectly like him in mind, body, and state.

(1.) Our minds shall be perfectly pure and holy, as he is holy. There shall remain no darkness in our understandings, no defect in our wills, no disorder in our affections; but our souls shall be all light, life, and love, as he is.

(2.) Our bodies shall likewise partake of his glory. But indeed they must be changed. For matter so gross and feculent, as our bodies are now, could not subsist in these pure ethereal regions where he dwells. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. xv. 50. Therefore
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this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality. Accordingly we are assured, Phil. iii. 20. 'that the
' Lord Jesus shall change our vile bodies,
' and fashion them like unto his own glorious body.'

(3.) We shall be like him in state; we shall be raised to like dignity and honour; as all the true lovers of the Lord Jesus, in this state of trial, are made conformable to his death, and know the fellowship of his sufferings, so they shall share the honours of his exaltation. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12, and Luke, xxii. 28, 29, 30. Not the Apostles only, but every soul that believes and behaves as they did. For it is not for them only that Christ prays, but for all that should believe through their word. And he hath promised that whosoever overcometh shall sit with him on his throne. Rev. iii. 21. and xxi. 7. For this all the redeemed shall sing with one heart and one soul, that sweet doxology of heaven. Rev. i. 5, 6. 'To him that loved us, and
' washed us from our sins in his own blood,
' and hath made us kings and priests.' The
highest

highest dignities of state and church upon earth were allotted to different persons by an express law in the Jewish constitution; so that the king could not be priest, nor the priest king, and no man could hold both offices. Christ, the Messiah, being the only person entitled by the law of Moses to possess both these dignities at once, was prefigured by Melchizedec, who was both king in Salem, and priest of the Most High God: and here we see that all the souls whom Christ hath redeemed are called both kings and priests, to assure us that they shall be like him in power and dignity.

And as they shall be perfectly like him in mind, body, and state, so they shall be perfectly and eternally happy in the enjoyment of him. Their communion shall be made perfect and everlasting with their likenesses.

It is sweet to a believing soul to talk and think of his Redeemer's glory now. But Oh! what will it be to behold it where he is! We must leave heaven to tell. And so I proceed,

III.

III. To consider the certainty of this happiness to all those for whom Christ thus prays.

It is his will, his dying request to his heavenly father. 'I will that they also may be with me.' He was now going to die for them in obedience to the will of his Father, and he makes it an article in his testament, which he consigns in the best hands to assure the execution of it. So that all the merit of his obedience unto death, and the consequent reward of it, with all the interest he had in his Father's love, concur to secure his legacy to them.

1. I say the merit of his obedience unto death secures it. Upon this ground he pleads for himself, and well knew that his request would be granted. Verses, 4, 5, of this chapter. 'I have glorified thee on earth,' &c. Upon the same ground he pleads for them, that they also might be with him. As certainly, therefore, as his prayer was heard in the one case, it will be heard in the other. As sure as he is now in heaven, they shall be one day with him who now believe on him.

2. The consequent reward of his obedience assures the success of his request. For now, he is not only in heaven, but exalted to the highest possible power and dignity there. Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; 'therefore God also hath highly exalted him.' Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10. Now all power in heaven and earth is committed unto him. Matt. xxviii. 8, 19. And surely all power in heaven and earth is sufficient to secure the salvation of all those whom he wills to be saved. His power will answer for his will, and his will for his power. If he had power without will, or will without power, the end could not be accomplished; but where both will and power, to perfection, go hand in hand, it is not possible his purpose can fail. He gives unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. John, x. 28. They may bid defiance to all the powers of hell and earth to frustrate the purpose of his love. Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39. His power will make his

his prayer and promise good against all opposition.

3. His interest in the Father's love gives infallible assurance to all who truly believe on him, that they shall be with him to behold his glory. He is the only begotten and well beloved Son of God, such as no creature ever was, is, or can be. And the Father loveth him with a perfect, unchangeable, and eternal love, such as no creature could ever share, which our Lord here expresseth by loving him before the foundation of the world. In him the Father is always well pleased. Him he always heareth, and can never refuse.

So that if salvation be of God, if it belongs to the power and mercy of God to bring a soul of man to heaven, they are sure of being there with Christ who truly believe on him.

Now, if we sincerely believe this truth from the mouth of the Son of God himself, this will teach us,

1. Moderation in the use of all the enjoyments of this life. Empires, kingdoms, and great estates in this world, are indeed
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but trifles in comparison of the glory that shall be revealed in us at the appearance of Jesus Christ; and surely they need not much regard their circumstances here, who have such a glorious prospect hereafter. God is now saying to such, as Pharaoh did to Jacob and his family, regard not your stuff, for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. Believers, however much you may possess in this world, there is a better and a more enduring substance laid up for you in heaven; and, therefore, learn to live indifferent about earthly possessions; but do all the good you can with them while you may. For your works will go with you, but your possessions will not. And however little you may have here, never mind it. There is enough before you; and a very little may bring you to your graves in peace, and pay your passage to eternal glory. Such perishing enjoyments are too low, too little for heavenly minds. To be eager and anxious about them suits not your glorious hope. If ye are sure to be with Christ, no matter what ye have, or what ye want in this world.

2. Patience and fortitude under all the disasters and calamities of life. To all those that are Christ's, the conflict must be honourable, and the end happy. A few days more, and we shall be with Christ to behold his glory. Then all our fears shall vanish, all our labours cease, and all our sorrows be forgotten for ever. If our afflictions be heavy, they cannot be long. Look up and think, in a little time this blast shall be over, and we shall be with Christ. There is joy, light, and life in the thought, sufficient to recruit a feeble mind. What can be too hard to bear for the glorious hope of being with Christ, to behold his glory? What can be too much to renounce for such a mighty prize? Can the troubles of life, or the terrors of death work any real harm to such a soul?

3. This subject suggests a very sweet and comfortable thought to all true believers in Christ separated from one another by distance of time or place. There is a day and a place, when and where they shall all meet together in perfect love and friendship, never to part any more. They shall
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all be with Christ where he is. Christians are not left here behind their Christian friends to mourn like them that have no hope of meeting any more. Through the grave they shall follow their friends, who cannot come back to them. And though the passage be dark, it is the very path through which the Prince of Life did enter into his glory, to hearten all his faithful friends to follow him. And soon as the strings of life have cracked, the everlasting doors shall lift up their heads, and all the glories of eternal day stand full before them. Then shall they behold the King in his beauty, and the shores of immortality lined with armies of saints, and angels who rejoiced at their conversion on earth, and who will not conceal the joy which they feel at their landing in heaven, Then, and there shall they meet their departed friends to welcome them to their blessed abodes with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

4. To conclude. Since Christ wills all his people to be with him, we may read in this the fitness and necessity of living like him, holy as he is holy. For it is only
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like and like that can agree. No concord between Christ and Belial. He will not know the workers of iniquity. Every one that but names his blessed name, is thereby obliged to depart from iniquity; much more they who indulge the hope of being with him, otherwise their hope is mere presumption, and must end in disappointment and despair. For he that hath this hope in him, viz. the hope of seeing Christ as he is, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. 1 John, iii. 3. And the more we strive, in a dependence on his grace, to purify ourselves from all uncleanness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, so much the more we assure the blessed hope of being with him, and clear our evidence of an interest in him. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the lusts and the affections thereof. They are not their own, but bought with a price; redeemed from their vain conversation with the precious blood of Christ, who gave himself for us for this very end, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, whom

whom he washed from their sins in his own blood, whom he sanctifies by his spirit, and for whom he prays in prevailing words. ' Father I will, that they also whom
' thou hast given me, be with me where
' I am, that they may behold my glory
' which thou hast given me: for thou
' lovedst me before the foundation of the
' world.' Amen.

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